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**The Author's Care of Himself  
On Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault,  
and Niklas Luhmann**

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# Preface

Much of what has been written on thinkers oscillates between two different approaches. On the one hand, thinkers are studied and compared with regard to specific topics. One could write a book (or three books), for example, on what Nietzsche, Foucault, and Luhmann wrote about the concept of power. On the other hand, depending on the scope of the work in question, a biographical reading still seems to offer the only access to the unity and entirety of the creativity of a thinker.

In this essay, I try to present a somewhat different route to the unity of the work: what I will call the *intrinsic geometry* of a mode of questioning and observing refers to the design of the linkage between observation and self-observation. The design chosen at this level accounts for many peculiarities of the resulting work. For example, the extent to which a full account of the work has to draw on biographical circumstances largely depends on how observation and self-observation were coupled in the work in question. In other words, the level of the intrinsic geometry seems anterior to the level of biography.

In the following, I will examine (i) how in the writings of Nietzsche, of Foucault, and of Luhmann highly recursive designs were employed at the level of their intrinsic geometries, (ii) what consequences these designs had for the continuation and reception of the respective projects, and (iii) what the status of such recursive designs is in current philosophy and sociology.

I am very much indebted to Arpad Scacolczai, who accompanied this work with his advice and encouragement. Arpad is much more an expert on Foucault than I am, and he generously shared his in-depth knowledge of Foucault's work with me. He pointed me to crucial texts and commented on earlier drafts of parts of this book. Without his help, I easily could have gone lost in Foucault's labyrinth. Still, and needless to say, I remain responsible for all the deficiencies of this essay.

Very special thanks also to Ruth Purchase and Steven Hicklin.

While I was working my way into the labyrinths of Nietzsche, Foucault, and Luhmann, I always felt as if I were engaged in some kind of *parrhesiastic* game (see sections 78.-79.), which forced me to take care of myself -- by writing this essay, by adding a fourth reference to its title!

Florence, July 1993

Stefan Rossbach



# One Introduction

## 1.

The three thinkers mentioned in the subtitle of this essay -- Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, Niklas Luhmann -- all have provoked (or are about to provoke) a tremendous amount of what is called "secondary literature": discussions, commentary, applications, criticism, summaries, reviews, assessments, evaluations, categorizations, judgements. The case of Nietzsche, for example, is almost frightening -- not only because of the scope and diversity of the responses to his writings but also because he himself, as is well-known, predicted his ambiguous fame (including its ambiguity) in spite of his being ignored throughout much of his conscious life. Many of the responses to these thinkers seem to imply that we have to be either for or against them, that they were right or wrong, better or worse than other thinkers, or right on that issue and wrong on this issue. And they were right or wrong, so we are told, because the world is or is not what they thought it is. I wonder whether there is a way of thinking with and about thinkers which does not end with this kind of binary choice: for or against. In fact, I wonder whether it would not be necessary to find such a way since it became one of the most frequently referred to (yet rarely remembered) features of our time to think that solid grounds upon which such choices can be made do not exist. Moreover, I wonder whether especially in the cases of Nietzsche, Foucault, Luhmann we would not have to look for new, more sophisticated ways of approaching their works precisely because these works question, each in its way, the grounds of a normality upon which we (de)value utterances, writings and, ultimately, being.

## 2.

The point of this opening is not, of course, to disregard or to disqualify everything that has been written on each of the three

thinkers. The point is rather to question the automaticity of many of the procedures which we are used to in academic work. We are used to situate thinkers in an history of (only) thought; we engage them in a discussion which is imposed on them; and we thereby presuppose a continuity and unity which functions like an invisible black board upon which names and ideas are being schematized: evaluation and categorization as the easiest ways to establish superiority over the texts of others. And what remains, then, on this magic black board, which somehow fills the space in between what thinkers thought at different times and different places, is nothing but pure thought which is somehow distinct from being, nothing but "fixed" ideas, fixed points, like stars at the sky which move, if at all, in predictable orbits and order, like things we own, like things we consider under control. Again, all this has been fruitful and perhaps, depending on the purpose of the inquiries, even necessary. But, again, I wonder what is hidden behind the darkness of that black board; I wonder what we would find if we started to question its taken-for-grantedness: perhaps more than thought? Thought and the struggle behind it? Being? Experience? The dynamics behind evolutions of thought? Thought and its reflection upon itself? Pieces of work which, in fact, do not refer to other pieces on the board but to ... themselves?

### 3.

Although this essay, unless it will be ignored, will undoubtedly run into the fate of being simply added to that immense and complex body of evaluating commentaries on Nietzsche, Foucault, and Luhmann, it does at least try to establish a difference to that body. Its purpose is not to be located at the level of critique, commentary or exegesis. It tries to inaugurate a new way of thinking about and with thinkers. It suggests a new way of comparing and relating thinkers without squeezing them into hierarchies; and it thereby tries to open new ways of using and continuing their works. The novelty this essay introduces lies in its attempt to trace the specific epistemological designs employed by certain streams of observations or modes of inquiries. Not each inquiry, of course, will arrive at its own epistemological design; instead, it is common that academic work, as an highly selective and specialized



mode of observing, is embedded in "disciplines": sociology, political science, history, and so on. The great bulk of academic work is being done in this disciplined way and thus takes for granted epistemological foundations sanctioned by the mere existence of the discipline. In these cases, tracing epistemological designs amounts to just another chapter in a sociology of science. But there are other, rare and exceptional cases of modes of observing which, for their own specific reasons, felt it necessary to establish their own designs. Often this happens in an uneasy, troubled and uncertain disengagement from earlier allegiances to disciplines or, more general, to assumptions which had been hitherto taken for granted and eventually became unacceptable. In these designs, self-reference substitutes the reference to a discipline. These designs are, then, specific forms of linkages between observation and self-observation, between self- and hetero-reference.

#### 4.

An observation is the unity of a distinction and a denotation.<sup>1</sup> It is, in other words, the execution of a distinction by denoting one of the two distinct sides. I observe, just now, the cursor of my computer screen as it is moving while I am typing these words. I observe it by treating it as distinct from everything else which is currently within the range of my vision. A denotation is necessary to accentuate the cursor against the background of everything else, which is in fact just "everything else": unspecified, unspecific, indefinite. Yet, while observing, I cannot but take for granted this distinction; I can only employ it, not observe it. As long as I observe the cursor I cannot observe something else for that would require another, different distinction between what is (then) being observed and everything else. I could turn my head (say, to the left), and I could observe (through the window of my room with a view): the cupola of the Duomo in Florence, Italy, as being distinct from everything else in the range of my vision. And I would learn that the distinction I employed while observing the cursor was already based on a selection, i.e. a distinction: namely the distinction between the distinction I employed in order to see the cursor and between all other distinctions I could have employed. Thus, one cannot distinguish without having already distinguished. Each

observation uses and creates a "blind spot"; each observation creates unobservabilities. But precisely this can be observed. Another observer could see me typing and could (then) see all the things I cannot see as I am following the cursor. He could see what I cannot see (he could see the Duomo) and he could see that I cannot see what I cannot see (he could see that I cannot see the Duomo). And even I could see all this, but it would require time: it would require the time necessary to switch from the distinction between the cursor and everything else to another distinction. To render unobservabilities observable requires either time or another observer, i.e. in either case *distance* -- temporal or, if you will, spatial distance.

5.

There are at least two possible ways in which a concern with distance can surface as a problem in an ongoing stream of observations. First, an observation may simply become too ambitious; it may continuously try to arrive and to transgress the limits of visibility and precisely thereby reveal its own secret: it may reveal that its own possibility sponged on a necessary restriction of visibility which is continuously reproduced by continuing the observation. Second, an observation may be directed, from the outset, towards its own unobservabilities; it may be directed towards independence and autonomy and thus may try to look at what it took for granted after having taken it for granted. In both cases, a first encounter with its blind spot may pose severe problems for the observation: its possibility evaporates with its secret; the momentum is lost. It is at this point where the continuation of observation becomes a problem and distance a solution. For distance makes the observation of unobservabilities possible. The blind spot cannot be removed but the observation can take its inevitability into account by following routes which are compatible with the necessity of distance. The question is then how the observation can return, time after time, to its earlier observations in order to see what it could not see at that time. In some sense, the observation must become *systematic* in that it somehow combines observation and self-observation. It must turn into a string of



observations where the previously used and thus unobserved distinctions continuously re-enter the string of observations.

6.

In this picture, there is, then, one point, one singularity where the momentum of observation is lost. I shall refer to this singularity as the *re-entry of the observation into itself*. The observation uses a distinction and later returns to it so that the earlier distinction becomes one of the two sides of the (now) actual distinction. In other words, the very distinction between what is being denoted and everything else later reappears *in its entirety* in a distinction of the same kind on the side of what is being denoted. For the observation, this moment of re-entry functions like a switch point. On the one hand, the re-entry marks the perhaps first encounter of the observation with itself; it may realize on this occasion that it has been based, all the time, on a certain degree of blindness. On the other hand, once the re-entry took place, the blindness itself has become visible so that some distance to what was previously taken for granted must have been installed already. The question is only how the observation connects to that distance and how it ensures, if it does, that this distance will be continuously reproduced in the future. To ensure this continuous creation of distance requires a systematic link between observation and self-observation. Somehow the observation must create space for itself in what it observes. But, as the different designs of Nietzsche, Foucault and Luhmann show, this can be done in various ways. The re-entry only enforces a choice and does not prescribe the outcome of that choice. The deeper reason for this logical incompleteness is the logical independence between a "self" and what it sees when it observes itself.<sup>2</sup> Due to the self-reference involved in the very procedure of self-observation, due to the lack of distance precisely at the singularity of the re-entry, self-observation is always an act of creation. This does not mean that there is no relationship between the choice made at the point of re-entry and everything that took place before; rather, *the choice consists precisely in a creation of such a relationship*. Since it enforces a creation (rather than an inference), the re-entry marks, in a sense, a lack of justification within a stream of observations, within a sequence of inquiries. Nevertheless,

the choice of design, once made, largely determines how the project, the stream of observations unfolds after the re-entry. In the following, I will refer to the level of that choice, i.e. to the specific design of the coupling between observation and self-observation as the *intrinsic geometry* of a research project, a stream of observations, a mode of questioning, or an evolution of thought.

## 7.

Once observation and self-observation have been explicitly linked, the observation from then on will be more than what is usually described as "reflexive". Academic work is always reflexive: one writes a paper at point A, then refers back to it later at point B, possibly corrects it, puts it into a larger context, or even rejects it. But, typically academic reflexiveness is only occasional, mostly oriented towards specific temporary projects and never towards the very activity of pursuing these projects, never towards the unity which connects all these activities into what counts as "knowledge". Science delegates *systematic* reflexion to a subfield, to epistemology, in order to be able to continue what it does, hoping that epistemology will take care of whatever doubts there may remain. Yet even epistemology or the sociology of science rarely arrives at an inclusion of the exclusion of self-reflexion, subjectivity and self-reference into its considerations. To be part of an academic "discipline" does not mean, then, to take up a burden, to suffer from punishment, control, or to be subjugated to discipline; it means quite the contrary: it means to be relieved from the burden of self-reflexion, it means to take for granted one's purpose, to rely on the discipline sanctioning one's doing. I could say (if it were true): "I am a political scientist", and everyone (thinks s(he)) understands! Academic discipline is a safeguard against re-entries. Still, re-entries do occur. The re-entry forces an observation to take care of itself, to sanction itself, to re-establish "self"-evidence. And precisely this can be done by relating observation and self-observation, by seeing the activity of seeing in what is being seen, by embedding the observation in what is being observed. The recursiveness of such a procedure invites feedback-effects: the observation learns something about itself while it observes itself *in relation to everything else it*



observes. It must be prepared, then, to move, change focus, perspective, mode or position in accordance with what is being observed. In this way, the observation cannot but try to live up to its own results *since these results now always refer also to the observation itself*. Projects which employ such a design not only develop but simultaneously *exemplify* their own epistemologies; and precisely thereby they give evidence of the very possibility of their results. The project itself, in its entirety, becomes an example of what it generates; it becomes (one of) its own output(s). This procedure is highly dynamic and non-linear. At first, nothing guarantees that its initiation leads to a stable setting. Stability must be achieved and cannot be inferred in advance.

## 8.

What does one have to see in order to be able (to continue) to see what one sees? -- this, in some sense, is the question which a thinker has to respond to at the moment of re-entry. After this encounter with himself, with what made him possible in the past, he now has to *create* the future conditions of his thinking and observing. He may return to or enter a discipline or he may instead develop his own personal line of inquiry, his own problematic, sanctioned only by its exemplification. In the latter case, when the re-entry is followed by an explicit linkage between observation and self-observation, subsequent work is likely to be situated outside of scientific traditions. For in that this type of work simultaneously generates and exemplifies its epistemology, it forms a science of its own, a Gay Science!, and, to some extent, closes itself off from scientific disciplines. Attempts to evaluate the self-referential work according to standards external to it usually follow the usual procedures and lead to predictable results: it is as if someone looks at a potato, then takes a knife, cuts and forms the potato until it looks like a pear, tastes it and then passionately and publicly complains that the thing doesn't taste like a pear, not at all! And those who nevertheless try to work their way into those projects, who try to arrive at an *internal* reading of those works, often struggle with their recursive, labyrinthine architectures. The unfortunate result is often a polarization of the audience, a reproduction of the for-or-



against-alternative -- only that now, due to the peculiar autonomy of self-referential work, the alternative remains unsettled, leading to a delicate stalemate between mainstream thinking and some loyal followers. The thinkers who performed or perform this type of work remain unstable entries, trouble-makers, on that black board of the history of thought; they function like touchstones forcing everyone who touches them to reveal his position, his personal truth.

## 9.

This essay tries to read the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, and Niklas Luhmann as examples of such touchstones: as works which implement specific linkages between observation and self-observation. Again, the point of this essay is not to either defend or challenge these authors; the point is instead to lay open the intrinsic geometry of their observations, to reveal how *concretely* each of them linked self- and hetero-reference. This requires an internal reading of their works, a reconstruction of their intellectual trajectories with a special emphasis on how they looked upon their own undertakings at their various stages. The evolution of the self-descriptions of their works is an important key to an understanding of their intrinsic geometries. I will therefore make use also of sources which are not always considered part of the main works: for example, in the case of Nietzsche, I will heavily draw on his letters, and in the case of Foucault, on his interviews. Although tracing the self-observation in the observation inevitably exposes, as far as available, biographical details of the lives of those thinkers, the following three chapters on Nietzsche, Foucault and Luhmann are not meant to be exercises in writing biographies. In other words, my question is not how the life of a thinker, his very personal situation, his state of mind generates his writings simply because this biographical question already presupposes a specific link between observation and self-observation: it links them in an asymmetrical way as if self-observation always guided the observation. Instead, my interest refers to a level prior to this level of biography: the very relevance of biography has to be verified in the first place.

Moreover, my presentation of first Nietzsche's, then Foucault's and then Luhmann's undertaking is more or something else than mere exegesis. My aim is not to trace all the hiding places and corners in their labyrinths, but to do analytical work: to specify and conceptualize the principles upon which those labyrinths were built. The aim is precisely to understand how their works came to be labyrinthine rather than straightforward, easily accessible and linear. What is it in those works that accounts for their complexity? The final chapter picks up this question again by means of a comparison. Again, the aim of comparing is not to hierarchize or categorize, but instead to render both my question and first tentative answers more precise. The presentation of three different designs at once and their comparison will also help to avoid thinking of one of these designs as the only possible or as the ultimate mapping of the world as it is. And if, in this way, the specific designs are being revealed as contingent, as selections made in response to certain requirements, then the question cannot be whether these selections were right or wrong. The question is instead what there is in our present that has made and makes these selections possible or likely. What is this specificity of our present of which these selections are concrete evidence? And what could be, then, the future relevance of these designs?



## Two Friedrich Nietzsche

### Part 1

#### 11.

In late 1874, early 75, Nietzsche projected altogether 13 Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen [Untimely Meditations], three of which were already finished and a fourth existed "in his mind".<sup>3</sup> He estimated that he would need five more years for the remaining ten and contemplated that 50 of those pamphlets "should have some effect". Seven years later, and now, in his own words, "at the height of his life and his task", Nietzsche was forced again and again to reflect upon his future and his work. This time, however, for more prosaic reasons: his pension granted in 1879 for six years would expire after four more years. In August 1881, Nietzsche asked his friend Overbeck, who managed his financial affairs in Switzerland, when precisely the last payment was to be expected. Nietzsche did not want to devote these four years to anything but to his task and its fulfilment -- if possible without any distraction whatsoever.<sup>5</sup> Absolute solitude was now the condition of his work and life.<sup>6</sup>

#### 12.

Nietzsche's earlier projection, of course, proved to be as wrong as it could be. He did not publish anything in 75 and had great difficulties in finishing only the fourth Unzeitgemäße Betrachtung on Wagner. In fact, in September of that year, he was "increasingly disgusted" by the very idea of publishing in general.<sup>7</sup> Apart from his piece on Wagner and its translation into French, Nietzsche's next publication would be Menschliches, Allzumenschliches [Human, All-Too Human] in 1878.<sup>8</sup> In the early 80s, in contrast, he seemed to be back in control: the fourth part of his Also sprach Zarathustra [Thus spoke



Zarathustra] was finished in February 1885; shortly before his pension expired.<sup>9</sup> In between, I shall argue, there was Nietzsche's crisis: a moment where he seemed to have lost all orientation. As his life plans of late 75 show, the loss of momentum occurred precisely at a moment when he came close to a complete picture of what he was doing and of what he was going to do. At some point, Nietzsche might have regarded the completeness of these outlooks on his life and his work as an achievement, but it was exactly their completeness that would allow him to problematize his work in its entirety.

13.

Nietzsche's crisis had many faces. There are several schemes of interpretation of why and how he lost direction that all fit the redundant evidence. In the following I will not provide a narrative account of this period from 1875 to 1881, but will highlight in a few words the schemes usually considered -- also by Nietzsche himself -- to be most important: Nietzsche's failure as a philologist, the increasing distance to Schopenhauer and in particular to Wagner, Nietzsche's deteriorating health, and the now recurring theme of loneliness. Of course, a separate treatment of these themes should not obscure that they were interrelated and mutually amplified their effects. Throughout my discussion, Nietzsche's reflection upon his work, his perspective, and his life will be crucial. I shall therefore make extensive use of the advantage that all his writings, unpublished fragments and most of his letters are available.

14.

Nietzsche was 24 years old when he became professor of classical philology at Bâle university. He had been promoted by his teacher in Leipzig, Ritschl, to this position without having written a proper dissertation.<sup>10</sup> Apparently, at this time Nietzsche already had some doubts about the role philology should play in his future life.<sup>11</sup> However, his success soon dissolved whatever doubts there might have been. In fact, his reluctance may well reflect that he himself

considered this strike of the "devil 'destiny'" only as a confirmation of what he had already enjoyed for some time: the status of the genius.<sup>12</sup> And yet Nietzsche's first book, Die Geburt der Tragödie [The Birth of Tragedy], ended his career as a scientist as rapidly as it began. While he was working on this book, from about late 69 to its publication in January 72, Nietzsche must have felt more and more that he was leaving his academic discipline. In January 1871, he applied for the then vacant chair in philosophy at Bâle and suggested his friend Rohde as his successor in philology. The ideas of the book -- the birth of tragedy out of the spirit of dionysian music, tragedy's death in the spirit of socratism, and the possible renaissance of tragedy in German philosophy and Richard Wagner's music -- do not add up to what would count as a scientific treatise but to a philosophical and political essay on art, culture and education. Accordingly, the philologists at first reacted with total silence. Nietzsche, anxious for reactions, for applause, let himself carried away and demanded in writing a response from his mentor and one of the biggest German names in philology, Ritschl, claiming that his book was a manifest and deserved if not agreement then at least opposition.<sup>13</sup> Ritschl's answer was diplomatic in its form, but highly ironical in its contents. Obviously, Nietzsche did not understand this irony. In particular, he did not notice that the devastating part of Ritschl's letter was an omittance: there was no comment whatsoever on the scientific part of Nietzsche's book, i.e. on his theses concerning the Greeks.<sup>14</sup> Comments of this kind would follow, soon enough, in Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf's famous pamphlet published in May 1872.<sup>15</sup> I will not go into the historical details of the exchange between Rohde, Wagner (defending Nietzsche), and again Wilamowitz-Moellendorf that followed this challenge. Two points, however, are important. First, Moellendorf criticized Die Geburt der Tragödie not only for its philosophical framework, but in particular measured it according to the standards of philology as a scientific discipline: there were no quotations from Greek texts in the book, historical dates were neglected and texts were assigned to the wrong periods etc. Moellendorf's critique quite accurately represented the discipline's viewpoint. The German philologist Hermann Usener told his students in Bonn that "someone who wrote something like that is dead as a scientist".<sup>16</sup> From one day to the other, Nietzsche lost his reputation as a philologist. He had difficulties in finding two students --



one studying German, the other law -- who would follow his course on Greek and Roman Rhetoric. Although students would return later, Nietzsche never regained his reputation as a scientist. The second point: Nietzsche was not at all impressed by this. It is true, the episode would later have repercussions even in the Zarathustra,<sup>17</sup> but it was only in retrospect that Nietzsche acknowledged his defeat (and interpreted it as a liberation). At first, he did not lose momentum; his self-confidence did not decrease. The opposite was the case. He had always wanted to have enemies; now he found one in Wilamowitz, and this "poor little boy, certainly befooled and seduced by others, had to be punished publicly".<sup>18</sup> This, however, had to be done by Rohde for it would have been against Nietzsche's honour as a professor to respond to the attack of a younger student who had just written his dissertation. Nietzsche did not even reconsider his profession. In September 72, he did not see himself as a philosopher -- only "a little bit".<sup>19</sup> It is not difficult to speculate on why Nietzsche was not at all shaken by this for the first time encountered silence of an audience. In some sense, he felt reconfirmed without seeing the necessity to change perspective. Of course, what helped him was that his book made him the first intellectual spokesman of the circle around Richard Wagner. It was here where his book did have an impact.

## 15.

Nietzsche's failure as a philologist did *not* lead him into an intellectual crisis. In fact, in 1873, he would again publish an article on Homer and Hesiod in Ritschl's philological journal "Rheinisches Museum". Nietzsche's interest in philology might in fact have increased in that period -- for reasons, of course, which had nothing to do with the success or failure of his book. For he discovered, in the summer of 1872, the pre-platonic philosophers, especially Heraclitus, who would have an important influence not only on Nietzsche's thinking but also on his relation towards his own work.<sup>20</sup> Also in the context of Nietzsche's increasing distance to Schopenhauer and Wagner, one should not underestimate the influential inspiration Nietzsche found in his philological studies. The various ways of thinking and living Nietzsche encountered in his studies provided a background against

which his masters were continuously measured so that, at the time when Nietzsche wrote his Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen about them, he had already gained intellectual distance to them. He encountered Schopenhauer's writings in late 1865, shortly after his arrival in Leipzig. During his military service, Nietzsche had a picture of the very popular thinker on his desk.<sup>21</sup> It was not just Schopenhauer's thinking that attracted Nietzsche, but also the philosopher's attitude, i.e. the close relation between Schopenhauer's life and his philosophy. Throughout his career as an author, Schopenhauer remained unconnected with universities or the philosophical establishment. He was the self-made man, the creator of his own world whose success would come only very late in his life. And before, Schopenhauer took great pleasure in this lack of recognition; he sacrificed his life for his philosophy. Schopenhauer's thinking started from the Kantian scepticism about human ability to apprehend reality and concluded that, although the will was the root of the intellect, an "objective" and deep apprehension of the world required the latter to be decoupled from the former. "The world can appear in its true colour and shape, in its full and correct meaning only if the intellect, rid of the will, soars freely over the subjects, energetic and active even without being driven by the will." For Schopenhauer, the ethical implication of Kant's scepticism was the renunciation of the "interested" will, the furthering of the separation of intellect and will, which for the genius reached its ultimate form. The works of a genius are characterized, then, as immediate, necessarily purified, instinctive, as the opposite of purposeful calculations, as the clear mirrors of the world. The genius was not part of the world to the extent that he had no interests in it; since he was detached from the world, the world could not but appear strange to him. The consequence was misery: a genius was lonely because of his exceptionality, he suffered from feelings of alienation, lacked practical skill and was close to insanity. A genius must be prepared to accept that only future generations might be able to understand and honour his ingenuity. Clearly, at the time when Nietzsche began to read Schopenhauer, he read him as a thinker who could make sense out of his, Nietzsche's!, misery in Bonn and of the early days in Leipzig. The reading of Schopenhauer was such a great emotional experience for Nietzsche simply because it seemed to give meaning to his uneasiness and unhappiness.<sup>23</sup> But the Schopenhauerian theme, the struggle with and



against the will on the route towards objective perception, was not only the point that brought Nietzsche to Schopenhauer; it was also the point that would soon lead Nietzsche away from him. The fact that he later would frame his central concepts in terms of wills (to knowledge, to truth, to power) was an explicit move against Schopenhauer. Later in Zur Genealogie der Moral [On the Genealogy of Morals], Nietzsche would in some sense generalize and dismiss (or at least: problematize) what he interpreted retrospectively into his way of reading Schopenhauer: the necessity to give meaning to suffering.

## 16.

Nietzsche met Richard Wagner in Leipzig in late 1868 through the quite purposeful arrangement of the Ritschls.<sup>24</sup> At first, Nietzsche had been sceptical about Wagner's music and it was only after the "Meistersinger" that he became one of his disciples. At their first meeting, they talked about Wagner's new opera and then about Schopenhauer's philosophy -- especially about the importance Schopenhauer assigned to music. As the most immediate objectification of the will, music was not so much part of the world, but in fact paralleled and doubled the world. The discovery of melody was, according to Schopenhauer, *the preferential task of the genius*.<sup>25</sup> Hence, Wagner entered Nietzsche's thinking as *the* incarnation of the genius described by Schopenhauer.<sup>26</sup> In fact, for Nietzsche, Wagner's life and creativity somehow confirmed Schopenhauer's philosophy.<sup>27</sup> In a letter to Wagner, on the occasion of Wagner's birthday 1869, Nietzsche states that only by regarding Wagner's "lonely and remarkable [merkwürdig] personality", he was able to explain many "purely scientific problems".<sup>28</sup> However, already this early letter is peculiar. For in other sections, it reveals that, from the very beginning, Nietzsche's commitment to Wagner was led by the expectation that, at some point, the as yet unquestioned genius, Wagner, would give way to the genius of (one of) his disciples.<sup>29</sup>

At first, Nietzsche would mention Wagner's name almost always in relation to Schopenhauer's. What he liked about both was, in his own words, the "ethical air" in their works and in particular that both seemed to be the founders and creators of their own worlds.<sup>30</sup> Die Geburt der Tragödie clearly was Nietzsche's sacrifice to Wagner; it was a book written for Cosima and Richard Wagner and, as such, did have the predictable effect.<sup>31</sup> In some sense, it was Wagner who gave Nietzsche a first mission and who inevitably destroyed Nietzsche's career as a scientist. The story of the relation between Nietzsche and Wagner has been told many times in many different versions. I shall not repeat them, but will only summarize a few, altogether five, points. First, Nietzsche started distancing himself from Wagner at the latest in early 74. His notebook entries from January of that year reveal that the phenomenon Wagner for the first time had become accessible to analysis. Second, again Nietzsche's philological studies may have been the origins of his doubts. Nietzsche had been studying the art of rhetoric and the history of eloquence; he planned an Unzeitgemäße Betrachtung on Cicero that was supposed to be directed against pomp, bombast, and pathos.<sup>32</sup> "Culture as veiling decoration" was one of the key terms. Apparently, Nietzsche was not able to avoid that, in his own studies, Wagner would come under fire.<sup>33</sup> Third, the increasing distance between Nietzsche and Wagner was not just a consequence of the former's metamorphosis; Wagner, too, changed.<sup>34</sup> In fact, Wagner's increasing anti-Semitism was one of the main reasons why Nietzsche broke with him.

Fourth, Nietzsche's crisis surfaced precisely while he was working on the fourth Unzeitgemäße Betrachtung, which was to be on Wagner. This piece on Wagner, projected perhaps at a time when he felt closer to the composer, was partly an expected, partly a self-imposed task. Already the third Betrachtung on Schopenhauer might have been only a postponement of his discussion of Wagner's project.<sup>35</sup> For Nietzsche, this task of writing about Wagner turned out to be a heavy



burden. He was still too close to be able to reveal his distance. When he announced a first draft to Gersdorff in September 75, he considered it as "impossible to publish".<sup>36</sup> In early October, he wrote to Rohde that the text was almost finished but would not be published because he was not yet "above" his experiences and acknowledged a lack of orientation.<sup>37</sup> The text apparently remained as it was until the end of April 1876. In between there were six difficult months. The winter 75/76 brought a rapid deterioration of his health, including a severe breakdown; he recovered only slowly. From mid February on, he was one semester on leave because of his health and spent some weeks with Gersdorff at the lake of Geneva reflecting upon his life-work.<sup>38</sup> When his clumsy proposal of marriage to Mathilda Trampedach was rejected in April, Nietzsche seemed to have felt more than ever the need to define and then to follow his own way.<sup>39</sup> Out of this mood, Nietzsche finished the fourth Unzeitgemäße Betrachtung. He added three sections presenting Wagner as a musician, a poet, and a writer. The text is very subtle, written as a homage to Wagner from an equal position. When the text was irretrievably sent off to the printer, Nietzsche was afraid of how it would be received in Bayreuth. Perhaps, this text was designed as Nietzsche's last attempt to arrive at an exchange with Wagner -- an exchange, of course, that would place Nietzsche beside and not behind the composer. However, Nietzsche would be disappointed. Wagner's response was overwhelming -- and superficial precisely because of that: He had not understood the text, perhaps had not even read it carefully. At that time, Wagner was too much involved in the staging of the first Bayreuther Festspiele, the opening of his own opera house.

## 19.

Nietzsche's encounter with Wagner, his adoration of Wagner, his servant attitude towards Wagner, and his increasing doubts about Wagner, doubts which Nietzsche would have liked to diffuse but was unable to do, and finally the break with Wagner -- this story would mark Nietzsche's life. Again and again, it kept cropping up in his letters as well as in his writings. The fifth and last point I would like to make here is, then: The phenomenon of Wagner introduced and confirmed a recurring theme in Nietzsche's thinking -- the theme of the mask and

the actor.<sup>40</sup> Already the Geburt der Tragödie is very much inspired by the *restlessness* of the problem of the transformed man: What forces, what power provokes transformation?<sup>41</sup> The book's answer is implicitly given in Nietzsche's presentation of the dionysian ecstasy as the origin of the tragedy. The tragedy does not begin with disguise and deception but instead with man being external to his previous life, to his roles and to the context in which he used to see himself; and most important: tragedy begins with man *believing* in his transformation and change. This analysis already contains as a germ the space in which the "actor" could appear as the one for whom authentic ecstasy is replaced by a *game* with ecstasy. The actor enjoys masks and purposefully stages himself in a game directed by him. He lives in a world *between* beauty and truth characterized by a staged show of ecstasy rather than by an absolute absorption in the latter.<sup>42</sup> Nietzsche's negative evaluation of "acting" was not a consequence of his break with Wagner, but its precondition. Nietzsche's distance to Wagner originated in his assessment of the role of acting in Wagner's art: this art was the art of acting, of imitation. Already in the fourth Unzeitgemäße Betrachtung, Nietzsche compares Wagner's life with a comedy and it was later, in the summer of 1876, when he witnessed the opening ceremony of the opera house at Bayreuth, that Nietzsche discovered that it was Wagner himself who directed that comedy. Nietzsche arrived at Bayreuth on July 23 and left already on August 2 *before* the first performance. He spent two weeks at Klingenbrunn where he took the first notes of what would later evolve into the first volume of Menschliches Allzumenschliches. He returned to Bayreuth, apparently in good mood playing the new role of the now distant observer of a comedy.<sup>43</sup> In his notes, Nietzsche would later remark that he was unable to accept any greatness which does not include honesty towards itself.<sup>44</sup> The life-threatening crisis of 76 was brought about by this sudden opening of an abyss: his adoration for the dionysian spirits, the very dynamics of his writings, of his life!, might have been exploited by an actor; it might have been based, then, on delusion, on self-delusion! And with the revelation of this life-preserving self-delusion, its life-preserving power evaporated.



From June 1875 on, Nietzsche's health deteriorated rapidly even if periods of recovery and aggravation kept alternating. Nietzsche had been ill almost throughout his entire life. The strong headaches started as early as 1859; from early childhood he was very short-sighted, and especially after his infection with dysentery during his voluntary work as a nurse in the Franco-Prussian war of 70/71, his colic-like attacks also led to persistent vomiting. The winter of 75/76 marked a first low; Nietzsche recovered in the spring after the university had exempted him from his duties for one term. Later, in May, Nietzsche requested a one-year leave -- not so much because of his health but because Malwida von Meysenbug had invited him to spend a longer time in Italy with her and some friends. However, even in this year without any teaching commitments, Nietzsche's health remained precarious. A doctor in Naples told him, in February or March 1877, that there were two possibilities: his illness could suddenly disappear or lead to blindness and a complete weakening of the brain, i.e. madness. After another examination in Frankfurt in October 1877, he was not allowed to read or to write. Throughout this time, Nietzsche is continuously observing himself, trying to specify what weather, what food, what discipline would have what effect on his health. And still, in 1879, he counted 119 days with strong attacks -- which usually meant that he had to spend the entire day in bed.<sup>45</sup> In May of that year, Nietzsche asked for his resignation from the university.<sup>46</sup>

Nietzsche always lived with the foreboding that he would turn mad. His father died in his 36th year after having turned mad; the diagnosis spoke of a "softening of the brain". Nietzsche was four years old at that time. And since apparently Nietzsche's father had already been ill for several years before his son was born, doctors in school considered him to be a likely candidate for the same fate. Hence, the number 36 was a magic number for Nietzsche; Lord Byron, too, died at 36, and Hölderlin was 36 when he was brought into a madhouse. Accordingly, the beginning of his 36th year was the time of Nietzsche's

farewell letters.<sup>47</sup> In fact, the winter of 79/80 marks the lowest point in the story of his illness. But the early 80s, by the same logic, are also the time when Nietzsche finally gained new hope; a new style emerges in his letters as well as in his texts. Although illness and the fear (or hope) of madness would continue to be recurring patterns of Nietzsche's life, the sense of crisis disappeared in the first years of the new decade, especially when he approached his 37th birthday in the late summer of 1881.<sup>48</sup> It was then, in the early 80s, when his thinking *created* its possibility.<sup>49</sup>

## 22.

His illness, his persistent suffering had ambiguous consequences for Nietzsche's writings. On the one hand, it constrained Nietzsche's thinking in so far as he simply could not work continuously for a longer period without interruption. The design and form of his writings, the aphorisms and the short enumerated paragraphs, were as much a matter of deliberate choice as they were a necessity.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, since Nietzsche felt particularly close to death throughout his life, he considered himself to be as free as one could be: "it is a privilege of the dying to say the truth".<sup>51</sup> Finally, as he himself acknowledges, in his fight against death, against his illness, he did not have much choice but to *accept* life, to cultivate a *will* to life: "-- out of my will to health, to life, I created my philosophy".<sup>52</sup>

## 23.

In the winter of 74/75, the motif of loneliness attains increasing importance in Nietzsche's letters. In February 1875, the composer Nietzsche was working on an hymn of loneliness, trying to capture it "in all its horrible beauty".<sup>53</sup> Later, while he was working on the first volume of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, Nietzsche deliberately withdrew into solitude. The common household with his sister at Bâle was dissolved in June 1878 according to his demand.<sup>54</sup> From his Hydropathic cure at Baden-Baden, Nietzsche explains that it was only his being alone, and not the cold water that could cure him.<sup>55</sup> Very



much in line with his interest in hiding is also his wish to publish Menschliches, Allzumenschliches under a pseudonym; the plan failed for practical reasons: his publisher did not want to introduce a new, unknown author.<sup>56</sup> After the publication of the book, Nietzsche observed a "strange alienation of many acquaintances and friends".<sup>57</sup> He became increasingly distrustful towards the whole world. For the summer he retreated to a small pension on a mountain near Grindelwald -- 6-7,000 feet high -- and asked his friends not to reveal this new temporary address to others. The necessity of hiding, his wish to remain incognito, soon became one of the characteristics of his letters. Later in Italy he regarded it as helpful that he lived in a country where he could not understand the native language of its inhabitants.<sup>58</sup>

## 24.

For the rest of his life, Nietzsche kept an ambiguous relation to his solitude. Somehow, it was a necessity -- partly because he occasionally regarded the sheer presence of others as a cause of any worsening of his illness; and somewhat later also because he wanted to avoid any distraction from his work, from the fulfilment of "his" task. Yet another aspect of this solitude is that his books were sent into a complete nothingness: after Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, Nietzsche's books hardly provoked any response. Nietzsche did not even have enemies; he was simply ignored. He was aware of this already after Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, but might have hoped that this would change. After the publication of Morgenröte [Daybreak], he complained that most of those who received his book would not even bother to thank him.<sup>59</sup> He soon began to equate loneliness with uniqueness -- in accordance with the contemporary cult of the genius. The more obvious the lack of recognition -- of an audience! -- would become, the more increased his determination to continue. And only sometimes would he allude to the tremendous strain behind this gesture: to follow the logic of his thinking regardless of the existence of any visible effect.<sup>60</sup>

The mid 70s see Nietzsche struggling with himself and his work. The disappointment about Wagner enforced his belief in the necessity of independence, of an autarky of knowledge: he must study harder, fill the gaps of his education in order to arrive at a now undisturbed view on "our old culture".<sup>61</sup> In mid 75, Nietzsche intends to study the hard sciences including economics.<sup>62</sup> This is the time when he, still unsure, tries to write about his "proper" vocation, about his "main point", his "life task" which he now sees clearer and clearer but still does not dare to reveal.<sup>63</sup> He drew plan after plan trying to "put his life into a context".<sup>64</sup> However, in spite of all efforts, a "kind of disappointment" accompanied Nietzsche in the fall.<sup>65</sup> At the lake of Geneva in the spring of 76, Nietzsche finds time to reflect upon his life and his work. In his notes from this period, life plans and work plans alternate on one piece of paper. Thinking and living somehow merge.<sup>66</sup> Still, in April, Nietzsche saw himself as "having been pushed into a jam", and this "with regard to many things".<sup>67</sup> He hated the constraint of and his entanglement with the "whole civilized order of things" and was trying hard to get out.<sup>68</sup> However, doubts about his doubts kept recurring. In mid 77 he even thought that, as a philosopher, he had been ill all the time whereas, as a scientist at Bâle, his health had been stable. In other but still his words: his "concern for thousand things which do not concern him" was the origin of his suffering. And: he could not live without the impression of being "useful".<sup>69</sup> Yet when he finally designed the front page of Menschliches, Allzumenschliches in December 77, he did not want his title as a professor to be mentioned.<sup>70</sup> As Nietzsche himself observed later, the new book marked "the end of a sloughing".<sup>71</sup> In Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, he had "for the first time run down the periphery of his own thinking".<sup>72</sup> He had been "outside of himself" and "only then was he able to see himself".<sup>73</sup> And the problem was, then, to get back to himself and to continue thinking and observing.<sup>74</sup>



What was at stake in Nietzsche's crisis? For Nietzsche, no doubt, everything was at stake. The sheer possibility that all his enthusiasm, his adoration might have been based on deception and self-delusion could not but give rise to a fundamental doubt and suspicion towards the world. What he took for granted in order to find support, in order to establish the grounds from which he could pursue his undertakings, dissolved whenever he got too close to it. The places where he thought he could anchor his work, his mission -- and himself! -- sooner or later, whenever he pushed and questioned harder, gave in and evaporated -- leaving Nietzsche without hold. For Nietzsche, this came to be a typical experience: "To look for love -- only in order to always find masks, to find and to break the damned masks."<sup>75</sup> Those he had adored as Gods, he revealed as comedians. There was always something deeply socratic about Nietzsche's unveiling of masks, something he strongly disliked for, after all, he had identified Socrates as the murderer of Greek tragedy. And now even the great counterweight to Socrates, Wagner, had collapsed in Nietzsche's thinking precisely, if you will, as a result of socratic questioning.<sup>76</sup> And then, after Wagner had been unmasked, the questioner had to turn towards himself (and his very questioning!) as there was no one else left. In fact, once Nietzsche thought he had revealed the life-preserving power of his self-delusion, his suspicion had to turn primarily against himself. And precisely in this gesture he saw a step forwards: "the image of the free-thinker remained unfinished in the last century: they negated too little and had themselves left."<sup>77</sup> The problem was, then, that Nietzsche's thinking -- and his illness! and his loneliness! -- committed him to an extreme degree of self-awareness although the very same thinking came close to declare self-delusion to be its basis and purpose. In the preface he added later, in 1886, to the first volume of Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, he wondered "how much falseness he would need to permit himself again and again the luxury of his truthfulness".<sup>78</sup> Nietzsche felt that he had to "forget himself",<sup>79</sup> he had to lie to himself -- but how could he lie to himself once he knew he would lie to himself? In other words, how can one believe again once one understood the utility of those beliefs?

## Part 2

### 27.

However Nietzsche got out of his crisis, however he overcame his disgust at writing, the result was an immense creativity. Out of his crisis there unfolded *two* streams of writings: from Menschliches, Allzumenschliches onwards to Der Wanderer und sein Schatten [The Wanderer and his Shadow], and from Morgenröte to Zur Genealogie der Moral. Within each of these two threads, each book was at first, i.e. before it got a title of its own, designed as a continuation or an appendix of the previous book. The second volume of Menschliches, Allzumenschliches was supposed to be an appendix to the first. Nietzsche even suggested to his publisher to simply continue the enumeration of the page numbers, i.e. the first page of the new book should have been page No.379, the first section should have been No.639.<sup>80</sup> The third part of the book, too, would later evolve into a separate title: Der Wanderer und sein Schatten; it was published in 1880 and would indeed be included in the second volume of Menschliches, Allzumenschliches in the 1886 edition. After the publication of Der Wanderer, Nietzsche for some time considered his life-work as done.<sup>81</sup> The 1396 epigrams of this first treatise were written between late 76 and late 79. During these three years Nietzsche was continuously and increasingly suffering from his illness and still he must have been feverishly producing texts whenever he possibly could. The second stream of writing began with Morgenröte and comprised Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft [The Gay Science], Also sprach Zarathustra, Jenseits von Gut und Böse, [Beyond Good and Evil], and Zur Genealogie der Moral. The notes that Nietzsche later put together as Morgenröte were first written under the title Pflugschar [Ploughshare] - i.e. the same title Nietzsche used for the very first notes of Menschliches, Allzumenschliches written at Klingenbrunn in 1876. However, Nietzsche soon changed his plans and also Köselitz who prepared the final drafts of Nietzsche's manuscripts before they were sent to the printer agreed, after a short hesitation, that "Morgenröte" would be the most appropriate title.<sup>82</sup> The first drafts of Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft were first written as books VI, VII and VIII of Morgenröte.



and then evolved into a separate book.<sup>83</sup> Jenseits von Gut und Böse was first announced as the second volume of Morgenröte before it got its own title.<sup>84</sup> It was printed at Nietzsche's own expense. Zur Genealogie der Moral should have been a continuation of Jenseits von Gut und Böse and as such was already sent to Nietzsche's publisher. Three days later, however, Nietzsche asked him to return the manuscript. The final text, now increased in length and a book of its own, was sent off again after 9 more days. Still, Nietzsche wanted to have the text closely related to his previous book.<sup>85</sup> From these plans, one can see that the second thread of writing branched after Morgenröte. One branch led to Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft and to Zarathustra, who appeared already in the fourth book of Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft in section No.342, i.e. at the very end of the 1882 version.<sup>86</sup> The other branch included Jenseits von Gut und Böse and the Genealogie. The famous plans of his never written Der Wille zur Macht [The Will to Power], first announced with Jenseits von Gut und Böse, indicate that this "final" book should have been a kind of synthesis of the two branches.<sup>87</sup> Nietzsche came close to a first draft of the book, indicating that it was a "torture", but then decided against the project; again and again he postponed the great plan, this time (1888) for at least ten years.<sup>88</sup>

## 28.

This very rough and incomplete philological report on Nietzsche's trajectory already indicates that he gained new momentum in the context of his work on what would later become Morgenröte. It was at this time, I will argue, when he finally arrived at a perspective in which he *believed*, a perspective which in itself created the distance it needed. Thus, in the early 80s, Nietzsche successfully handled the re-entry of his project, which *therefore* continued as it did. In particular, this re-entry took place *before* the idea of the eternal return entered his thinking (and *before* he met Lou Salomé).

After the "twilight of *his* idols", i.e. after Schopenhauer and Wagner ceased to provide anchors for his being, Nietzsche faced the danger of running into the same fate: to simply dissolve under intense questioning. Somehow, he had to take care of himself -- and so he did. His solution is a very complicated gesture of thought which is at the centre of many of the ambiguities of his subsequent writings. On the one hand, when it came to himself, he stopped questioning and in fact started to *generalize his own case*. Yet on the other hand, precisely this gesture allowed him to continue questioning and observing. For now he could see himself in everything he saw in his environment and, more important, he could see his environment in himself. It was this move, this delicate mediation between self- and hetero-reference which slowly but surely allowed him to overcome the short-circuit of his observations of his work. Nietzsche was prepared for this move: already Schopenhauer had taught that to be able to see the general in the specific was one of the crucial characteristics of the genius.<sup>89</sup> For the Nietzsche of the early 80s, the specific where one could find the general was he himself. He was the evidence, the indication of an evolution affecting his contemporary society. "How strange!", he wrote in late 1880, "In each moment I am ruled [beherrscht] by the idea that my story [Geschichte] is not only personal, but that I do something for many people when I live in this way and form and distort [verzeichnen] myself: it is always as if I were a plurality, and I talk to it intimately seriously-comfortingly."<sup>90</sup> A bit later, after the publication of Morgenröte, he thought it was time to continue the book as soon as possible for he would otherwise "forget his experiences (or 'thoughts')".<sup>91</sup> This last qualification which brings experiences so close to thought (in Nietzsche's inverted commas!) points to the space from which he observes and to the new problems this space generates: Nietzsche, after all, had to hurry for he might simply forget the evidence, his past, i.e. the data that nurtures his philosophy and his observations. Perhaps he had adopted this new perspective already at the time of Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, but it was only later that he understood and accepted it and thus was able to make productive use of it.



In that Nietzsche generalizes his case, self-observation becomes the key to his observations of his contemporary society. Since self-observation presupposes a distance in time, he can only relate his *past* to what he observes. He must see his past in the present and thus his own experience becomes a prophecy: society will have to go or goes through what he had to go through. From this perspective, Nietzsche must see himself as always at least one insight ahead. Shortly after he had finished the last corrections of *Daybreak*, he was moved to tears by a "new view" which he had "ahead of everyone".<sup>92</sup> In this way, his perspective creates the distance which renders it possible; in some sense, this distance is a distance *in time*. But only in *some* sense! For whatever is observed through these lenses becomes a future past, a lens in itself. In this setting, distance is continuously created. This configuration is not just an imposition of the known upon the unknown. Rather, known and unknown are here mutually constitutive in a cyclical way: the imposition also affects the known.

This perspective as such is, at first, seldom discussed explicitly in Nietzsche's texts for it is the perspective from which he speaks and observes. For himself the circular link between self-observation and observation was held together through the notion of "necessity". It is later, especially in the prefaces he added to his books in 1886/87 and also in *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (written shortly after the prefaces), that he explicitly justifies and reconfirms his writings and the position from which they were written via the concept of necessity. He added the prefaces precisely in order to reveal the necessity behind his own trajectory. And it is this necessity which makes his development *representative*.<sup>93</sup> The new prefaces, he suggested, should be read one after another, as a sequence, and then would disclose the entry to "his cave, i.e. his philosophy".<sup>94</sup> And this also meant that whoever starts reading his writings, *must* as well cope with all of them.<sup>95</sup> In this series of prefaces, the introduction to *Morgenröte* contains the first hint to the main contents or aspect of this necessity: it is *within* Nietzsche that the

inevitable self-overcoming of morals took place *for the first time!*<sup>96</sup> It is within Nietzsche that for the first time the truth behind the truth, the value of values is questioned. Nietzsche's experience, in other words, is nothing but a first manifestation of the general "law of the necessity of 'self-overcoming'": all ideas which claim universal validity must, by their own claim, also apply to themselves.<sup>97</sup> Accordingly, his name would be remembered in the context of "a crisis so far unknown on earth".<sup>98</sup>

### 32.

In the early 80s, however, the successfully established link between self-observation and observation surfaces in a new self-confidence. Nietzsche is now certain and positive about his mission; a new self-assured tone emerges in his writings. Still working on the epigrams that would later become Morgenröte, Nietzsche already felt that he had found "a way and an exit" in his "moral mine".<sup>99</sup> At the end of 1880, his subterranean work has become an "attic-solitude" [Dachstuben-Einsamkeit] and for no other "attic-lodger" had "the daybreak shed light on things more charming and desirable".<sup>100</sup> The book itself, also called "Daybreak", was supposed to be a "decisive step, a destiny more than a book" and, in any case, a book that would make him "immortal".<sup>101</sup>

### 33.

In order to understand Nietzsche's euphoria, which went beyond his usual celebration of a new book, it is important to see how the newly established perspective solved several of his problems at once. I will only mention two of them. First, Nietzsche managed to ensure a continuous self-observation in his observations. This opens the possibility that previously unobserved unobservabilities can re-enter the ongoing observations even if with a time lag. In fact, by generalizing his own case, Nietzsche is able to reinterpret and revalue this time lag in a positive, affirmative way: the time lag becomes an advantage; Nietzsche is ahead of everyone. From then on, his writings show a



peculiar duplicity. They refer to everything, to modern society but also to himself and (only) time mediates between these two poles. Thus, it is Nietzsche's philosophy itself which assigns great importance to his biography, but it would still be *against* this philosophy's claim to read it as an overdone biography. Second, in this gesture, Nietzsche managed to do both to accept and to forget himself. For what he *must* take for granted in his observations is his own past: "It always required time, recovery, remoteness, distance, before I desired to peel, to exploit, to expose, to "describe" (or however you may want to call it) a posteriori something experienced or survived, some of my own facts and fates for the purpose of perception". Thus, Nietzsche's overcoming of his past is always embedded in his observations: "One should talk only about what one overcame."<sup>102</sup> In this sense, to turn one's life into a prophecy reflects the highest degree of self-affirmation. And precisely by taking his past for granted and himself as a reference to something beyond himself he was able to "forget" himself. Again, Nietzsche never studied himself in order to "find" himself; he never looked for himself. On the contrary, the moment when he saw himself was precisely the moment of his crisis.<sup>103</sup> He was interested in his past only as an indication of a dynamics that would command society at large. Thus, in late 1880, he was able to write: "What I miss in myself: this deep interest in myself. [...] I have never deeply reflected upon myself."<sup>104</sup> The time unit in which he used to think was not a life time, especially not his life-time, but the millennium.

### 34.

The new perspective also brings some new problems. For if Nietzsche turns his experience, his being into a prophecy of society's fate, then he burdens himself precisely with the future of this society. It is with his work on Morgenröte that the theme of the burden, the load, and the responsibility he has put on his shoulders appears.<sup>105</sup> The motif becomes increasingly intense in the following years, sometimes as an intimidation or even coercion.<sup>106</sup> In his writings, Nietzsche tries hard to at least lighten this burden. Occasionally, with a new text, he feels a relief, especially after he finished the first part of Also sprach Zarathustra,<sup>107</sup> but then it is as if his own writings only reconfirm the

burden. In late 1887, after four parts of Zarathustra, after Jenseits von Gut und Böse, after Zur Genealogie der Moral, he still has to turn "to the main concern of his existence" because he is "condemned" to this turn.<sup>108</sup> And the fourth part of Zarathustra is, after all, just an "intermezzo".<sup>109</sup> The burden Nietzsche feels as well as the impossibility of its removal is, of course, an immediate consequence of his peculiar perspective, a corollary and reflection of the position from which he observes. And this position, once it is occupied, reconfirms itself; again: it creates the distance which makes itself possible. The burden is only the fly-wheel of this dynamics. "There are ways, which do not allow that one follows them backwards; and thus I go forwards, because I must go forwards."<sup>110</sup>

### 35.

... the mask of the prophet. His life as a prophecy, the generalization of his own case: this way of thinking, of observing!, also had to imply that the problem of the mask became universal. "What wants to be regarded as true must not be true."<sup>111</sup> In fact, in some sense it thereby ceased to be a problem for it became the *characteristic* of life and as such had to be accepted, to be respected. Reverence for the mask, "superficiality out of profundity"<sup>112</sup>: this is how Nietzsche's tiring and dangerous uncovering of masks came to an end. It is only through the mask that life seduces life to its continuation. And in this way the search for truth, although a mask in itself, becomes a gesture against life; it becomes an attempt to end the play of the masks and thus turns against itself. An obvious conclusion was, of course, that Nietzsche himself had to accept, had to believe in a mask; yes, he needed a mask if he wanted to be heard! So he came to adopt the mask of the prophet. His life as a prophecy, the generalization of his own ...

### 36.

The circularity of the previous section illustrates, again, the autocatalytic principle of Nietzsche's perspective. As such, his mask did



not set up a static situation; rather it referred to a way of thinking, of observing, of becoming. His mask covers and inaugurates a process of a continuous self-displacement; as the dynamics behind this process, however, the mask itself remained the same once adopted. In course of his project, Nietzsche invented the name Zarathustra for this mask and thus introduced a precarious and peculiar duplicity. Zarathustra is, in other words, the form in which Nietzsche's project occurs in its own meaning world.<sup>113</sup> Hence, it is no accident that the story of Zarathustra begins, after ten years of loneliness in the mountains, one morning when Zarathustra got up with the *(D)aybreak*.<sup>114</sup>

### 37.

The figure of Zarathustra and the idea of the eternal return, at first, appeared separately in Nietzsche's writing. Apparently, the name Zarathustra stems from a Persian religion, zoroastrism; Nietzsche encountered the ideas of zoroastrism in his philological studies in late 1870 or early 1871 and must have been fascinated by the idea that this religion could have dominated the Greeks if the Persians instead of the Romans had got upper hand over them. Nietzsche also considered that Heraclitus might have been influenced by at least some ideas of zoroastrism.<sup>115</sup> In his notebooks, the name Zarathustra did not appear before late August 1881, and then already closely related to the idea of the eternal return and "a new way of living".<sup>116</sup> The first entry on the "Eternal Return of the Same", however, was written three weeks before that, at the beginning of August 1881 in Sils-Maria, "6000 feet above sea-level and above all human concerns".<sup>117</sup> It is quite possible that the eternal return entered Nietzsche's thinking via categories of the natural sciences. In his clumsy efforts to prove the idea, he uses concepts such as "force" and "equilibrium". The "world of forces", so the argument, does not decrease for, in our infinite past, it would have been completely exhausted if it did decrease. Moreover, the "measure of the force of the universe" is finite at any moment in time so that, Nietzsche concludes, the number of "possible changes, situations, constellations, combinations" is finite although for all practical purposes incomprehensible. Thus, if these forces operated already for an infinite amount of time, then all these combinations must have recurred and

keep recurring infinitely. Nietzsche tries several versions of this proof - some more, some less subtle -- but never arrived at an explanation that satisfied him.<sup>118</sup> However, his interest in the natural sciences at that time was to a large degree due to his wish to somehow prove the eternal return of the same. His efforts are interesting because they do indeed prove something: they show that what Nietzsche envisioned was the eternal return of *the same*, i.e. of precisely the same in all details. But there are also other reasons why only in this version, as the return of exactly the same, the idea fits into Nietzsche's thinking.

### 38.

Although he perhaps never gave up the idea that he could eventually arrive at a proof of the eternal return, Nietzsche soon discovered that the concept as such would have tremendous effects once people actually *believed* in it. In his thinking, this possibility soon superseded any interest in a proof.<sup>119</sup> What did, then, the eternal return mean for Nietzsche? From the outset, the idea always occurs in the context of a new way of living, i.e. as an ethics or, if you will, an art of life. The most important aspect of the eternal return is an omittance, the absence of any direction, of any teleology, of any "beyond". Thus, the eternal return was an anti-christian idea based on the rejection of any hope of salvation, of any reliance on an (improved) life after death. It was designed to throw mankind back to itself. For if this, our life returns with all its details, "with each pain and each lust and each thought and sigh", then we must live accordingly, we *must* do something about it *now*: "What do we do with the rest of our life -- we who have spent the greatest part of it in the most profound ignorance?"<sup>120</sup> The proposal of the eternal return should "force mankind to take decisions which determine the entire future".<sup>121</sup> It was supposed to function as a selective principle: those who are not able to endure the infinite recurrence of their current existence will either have to change or to perish, whereas those who are able to enjoy and affirm their lives will prevail.<sup>122</sup> The final result of this selection is the *Übermensch*, who wants his life as it is for eternity. The eternal return was, then, an educating lie or, in better words, an educating *truth* -- "truth" here in a very Nietzschean sense. Accordingly,



the proclamation or, if you will, revelation of the eternal return was an act of "truth-telling",<sup>123</sup> a "new enlightenment".<sup>124</sup>

39.

I repeat: from the way Nietzsche tried to prove his idea *and* from the frame in which this idea occurs, i.e. from the role it was supposed to play, I conclude that what was at stake here is the eternal return of the same, of precisely and exactly the same again and again. Only in this version expresses the eternal return *the* highest formula of self-affirmation. It must not leave any possible escape into any kind of "beyond"; it must not be mistaken, for example, with a return of the similar. "The similar is not a degree of the same: but something completely different from the same."<sup>125</sup> In fact, Nietzsche is as explicit about this point as one can be. Even the subtle distinction in German between "das Gleiche" and "das Selbige" cannot diffuse his clarity: "Und wenn du einstmals wiedergeboren wirst, so wird es nicht zu einem neuen Leben oder besseren Leben oder ähnlichem Leben sein, sondern zu einem *gleichen und selbigen* Leben, wie du es jetzt beschließt, im Kleinsten und im Größten."<sup>126</sup>

40.

The belief in the eternal return of the same is in line with Nietzsche's mask, the mask of the prophet, which, too, was to reflect the highest degree of self-affirmation. However, the preaching and teaching of this belief is a delicate business for his project, which after all had universalized the problem of the mask: what wants to be regarded as true must not be true (section 35.). The universalization of his own case was indeed the key to Nietzsche's escape from his crisis; it was literally this: a *self-overcoming*. But this implied, of course, that Nietzsche's crisis and his escape, i.e. the re-entry, had to be generalized as well. In other words, Zarathustra's problem to provoke a belief as a response to a crisis is precisely the generalized duplication of Nietzsche's (earlier) problem, the problem of the transformed man.

But Nietzsche's earlier problem, his crisis!, was indeed resolved. It was resolved in a specific way: Nietzsche forced himself to believe in a specific mask, i.e. in his life as a prophecy. Once he entered the autocatalysis of this new perspective, he was able to justify this move simply because his new perspective was self-confirming. The move as such, the jump into the circle was justifiable only a posteriori; the circle contained its own reasons. These reasons, however, always presuppose the circle. They do not justify anything beyond the circle; in particular they cannot rationalize the creation of the circle in the first place. *This lack of justification marks the singularity of the re-entry of Nietzsche's project into itself.* Moreover, Nietzsche was able to resolve the crisis precisely because he *jumped* out of it; precisely because he left the straight-jacket of reasons, i.e. because he *lied* to himself. He closed his eyes for less than a fraction of a second -- and that was enough to find, again, reasons, necessity, and determination: "One listens, one does not search; one takes, one does not ask who gives; a thought flashes like a lightning, with necessity, in its form without hesitation -- I never had a choice."<sup>127</sup>

Accordingly (!), Nietzsche never justifies the eternal return of the same in his publications. He never discusses the consequences of the belief in the eternal return for mankind. In order to *create* this belief, its utility, i.e. its intended consequences must not be mentioned. In some sense, the idea of the eternal return *exploits* the dynamics of beliefs and truths in order to provoke mankind to take care of itself. And since believing presupposes the absence of reasons, it must not be revealed that this belief is precisely this: just a belief, a mask that covers a purpose and its effects. The difficulty for Nietzsche is to inaugurate a belief -- a mask, a self-delusion, a truth -- without revealing, i.e. without destroying the life-preserving function of beliefs in general. Hence "it is quite possible", Nietzsche wrote, "that I become dumb one day -- out of philanthropy!!!"<sup>128</sup> Nietzsche's secret is that his secret *must* remain a secret. In particular, Zarathustra must not tell what Nietzsche wants;



all he can do is to set the task "to guess what his purpose is".<sup>129</sup> In fact, it is astonishing how inconspicuous the eternal return eventually emerges in the third part of Also sprach Zarathustra.<sup>130</sup>

#### 43.

In the famous scene of *Das Tanzlied*, Zarathustra whispers something to Life, and Life responds: "You *know* this, o Zarathustra? Nobody knows this. --"<sup>131</sup> The text, of course, does not reveal what nobody knows, but other sources do: Zarathustra's secret is the eternal return of the same *and* the tremendous scope of this idea.<sup>132</sup> But the proposal of this idea remains a precarious task, a delicate balancing between secrecy and revelation. Zarathustra's silence is as interesting as his preaching. His silence corresponds to Nietzsche's inability to write the final, ultimate, synthesizing book -- Der Wille zur Macht. That Zarathustra knows what nobody knows is a contradiction and *must* be a contradiction. Zarathustra preaches out of the morass of logical paradoxes; in fact, he *is* a paradox which "combines all opposites into a new unity".<sup>133</sup> In that they push logic to its limits, Nietzsche's writings and Zarathustra's preaching are on the borderline of what can be communicated; and one wonders what would happen if this borderline is eventually crossed.

#### 44.

The end of the previous section leads over to the transition from observation to madness -- a theme which I cannot fully develop in this essay. To be sure, the final answer to the question of what caused Nietzsche's illness and of what the relation between illness and madness was must remain open. However, there are still a few lines of investigation which to my knowledge have not yet been sufficiently explored. For the transition to madness was not just a break with the past; threads of continuity link Nietzsche's trajectory of thought with what would later become symptoms of his madness. I will list here only four of those threads. First, in that Nietzsche's madness surfaced as a kind of inaccessibility, it is in line with Nietzsche's intense striving for

distance and loneliness. His madness appears here as a limit position characterized by an infinite distance to everything one can observe from this position or, rather, to everyone who can observe this position. In his search for distance, Nietzsche *disappears* into madness. Second, towards the end of his conscious life, Nietzsche returns to the theme of the mask -- but now in an extreme and puzzling form. In his famous letter of January 6, 1889, to Jakob Burckhardt, Nietzsche runs through a series of roles and masks, including the mask of god, and even observes that "strictly speaking [he is] all the names in history".<sup>134</sup> The gesture of these letters, i.e. the continuous self-displacement is, in some sense, just an extreme extension of the perspective Nietzsche had been employing all the time.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, the mask of the god and therefore, if you will, Nietzsche's megalomania corresponds to his self-assigned position of the creator of values. Third, since he always saw himself endangered by insanity, Nietzsche throughout his life gave hints as to how he interpreted madness. In Jenseits von Gut und Böse, for example, he presented insanity as a mask of an "unfortunate all-too-certain knowledge".<sup>136</sup> His self-confirming perspective, i.e. the autocatalysis of his project may well have produced *certainty* as a result of an sufficiently high number of runs through the same circle. An inescapable certainty would be, then, the infinite limit of Nietzsche's epistemology: "Not doubt, but certainty is what makes insane."<sup>137</sup> In Morgenröte (!), Nietzsche describes madness as what always paves the way for new ideas.<sup>138</sup> No doubt, from 1888 on, Nietzsche did not fight against insanity; rather, he devoted himself to it and, as far as possible, tried to design it. Fourth and finally, one may reflect on Nietzsche's trajectory in the context of the three metamorphoses of the spirit Zarathustra describes in his speeches: the spirit first becomes a camel, and the camel, a lion, and the lion, finally a child.<sup>139</sup> The innocence of the child, the innocent childish game of creation had been a persistent theme in Nietzsche's thinking throughout his life. What is striking in the reports witnesses gave on Nietzsche after 1889 is the obvious regression to his early childhood behaviours. Fears he had as a child returned; his handwriting became childish again; and even his problems with the German dative return from his pre-school period. As a patient, Nietzsche is the sometimes obedient, sometimes unrestrained child.<sup>140</sup>



The previous discussion should not be misunderstood. The point here is not that Nietzsche had been mad all the time; that his writings were the writings of a mad man. The point is just the opposite: Nietzsche should be taken seriously including his slow metamorphosis into madness -- an end, by the way, which may seem sad to us, but perhaps was not so for Nietzsche. The question I would like to pose is, then, whether it is possible to approach Nietzsche's insanity as the infinite limit of his project, of his observations. Is it, then, that in his madness he remained truthful to what he observed, to his perspective to the extreme? Is it that, in his madness, he exemplified the ultimate conclusions of truthfulness? "We make an experiment with truth! Perhaps mankind will perish with it!"<sup>141</sup> Is it that he sacrificed himself for *this* demonstration? And, by relating truth and madness, does he not anticipate the ultimate conclusions of truthfulness?<sup>142</sup> The *epistemological* relevance of Nietzsche's madness remains to be explored.

# Three Michel Foucault

## Part 1

### 46.

In 1976, a bit more than one year after the publication of Surveiller et Punir [Discipline and Punish], Michel Foucault published the first volume of a History of Sexuality under the Nietzschean title La Volonté de Savoir [The Will to Knowledge].<sup>143</sup> The back of the book's cover revealed that this volume was supposed to become the beginning of a series of not less than six volumes. It would be followed, so the plan, by La Chair et le Corps, La Croisade des Enfants, La Femme, la Mère et l'Hystérique, and by Les Pervers and Populations et Races. And as if that was not enough, Foucault announced yet another forthcoming book, Le Pouvoir de la Vérité [The Power of Truth], which, according to the pathos of its title, might have been designed as a kind of conclusion of not just this series on sexuality, but also of his life work. His ideas must have seemed transparent enough to him to let him believe he could finish one volume every three months.<sup>144</sup> However, already in December 1976, shortly after the first volume had come out, Foucault refused to comment on his new book and claimed that "finishing a book is also not wanting to see it anymore".<sup>145</sup> In fact, as is well known, Foucault's plans were never realized in the outlined form. He published his next books, L'Usage des Plaisirs [The Use of Pleasures] and Le Souci de Soi [The Care of the Self], -- although still as parts two and three of the sexuality series -- not less than eight years after the first volume. In between there was Foucault's crisis -- self-imposed and seemingly unnecessary as one wonders why he had to put so much pressure on himself by publicly committing himself to such enormous undertakings. Soon he was confronted with rumours that he was finished, had nothing more to say.<sup>146</sup> However, during those years Foucault was not just struggling with a book project that did not continue as envisaged. In fact, already in the very first lectures



Foucault gave in 1976, he expressed radical doubts about his work as a whole -- the major point of this self-critique being precisely that his work was just repetitive and that it "had failed to develop into any continuous or coherent whole".<sup>147</sup> The crisis, then, was not only related to books he planned to write in the future but concerned his entire intellectual trajectory, his relation towards his work and therefore his life.

#### 47.

I started this discussion of Foucault's trajectory in the way I did in order to point to similarities to what I had previously said about Nietzsche. In both cases, a moment of crisis occurred shortly after the thinker came close to a complete overview of what he would think in the future. Moreover, the similarities do not stop here. In both cases, a sabbatical year did not dissolve but only reconfirmed and intensified the problems; a peculiar silence encountered as response to one of their books played its part in the crisis;<sup>148</sup> work on prefaces or proposals, in short self-reflection was the crucial operator in the changes or continuities the projects followed. Foucault, just as Nietzsche, at certain points had problems seeing himself as a philosopher and only later, in the early 80s, thought about his work in terms of philosophy.<sup>149</sup> And one could go on like this for several pages: both Nietzsche and Foucault worked and wrote obsessively; both had severe problems relating to others and could be very harsh towards friends;<sup>150</sup> there were times when both would give the impression of Dandyism;<sup>151</sup> both had a fragile health and both from early on were considered as bordering on madness;<sup>152</sup> each book they wrote only seemed to intensify their wish to write new ones as the previous needed to be explained, qualified, enlarged, specified etc.; in both cases the crisis erupted in the year 76 and ended in the early 80s, i.e. the crises lasted equally long; both, at crucial moments in their lives and works, found consolation in the fact that at least some readers -- in the case of Nietzsche: Georg Brandes, in the case of Foucault: Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow -- were able to read their writings with sensibility;<sup>153</sup> and, of course, the topics of their work, their thinking at this or that stage seemed congruent. However, all these similarities, paradoxically!,

are due to a fundamental difference in the way the projects started, which makes Foucault's crisis and his trajectory a completely separate case.

48.

Before I turn to this crucial difference which explains many of the similarities, I will now browse through some of the most obvious reasons why, already at the level of methodology, a discussion of Nietzsche must not be an archetype of a discussion of Foucault. First, there is an important difference in the kinds of sources upon which an essay like this one can be based. Since, in the case of Nietzsche, his complete oeuvre including sketchy notes, including thousands of letters he wrote as well as thousands of letters he received are easily available, it is indeed not too difficult to reflect upon the ideas, his moods and problems he had on, say, one specific afternoon. In contrast, my discussion of Foucault's intellectual trajectory and his crisis must be based exclusively on the published materials -- books, articles, interviews -- and some of the lectures he gave at the Collège de France. The first biography of Michel Foucault came out only in 1989 - largely based on the same material and on interviews with Foucault's contemporaries.<sup>154</sup> Second, and qualifying the first point, there is in the case of Foucault nevertheless an important source which reveals his reflection upon his own work: his interviews. For, in contrast to Nietzsche, Foucault was already during his lifetime a successful writer in terms of the number of books sold. At the latest after Les Mots et les Choses [published in English as The Order of Things], Foucault was a celebrity. The book became so fashionable that it had repercussions even in films by Aragon and Godard.<sup>155</sup> With the success came requests for interviews and, of course, the public lectures at the Collège de France. On several occasions, Foucault commented positively on these opportunities for self-reflection as they helped him to clarify his concerns.<sup>156</sup> He considered the public justification and explanation of his work an integral part of his role as a writer and lecturer. In some (although remote) sense, these interviews and his responses to questions raised by his readers play a similar role now as Nietzsche's letters played in the previous part: they indicate how Foucault at various



stages of his project looked at his own undertaking. In fact, what makes these interviews especially valuable is that they played a constitutive role for the way Foucault's work developed. In the case of Foucault, the relation between interviews and work is more intense and immediate than the relation between letters and work in the case of Nietzsche. The third and final point in this short list refers to the different ways the projects came to an end: Foucault died in June 1984, only a few weeks after *L'Usage des Plaisirs* and *Le Souci de Soi* had come out. It seems as if Foucault had known (or at least: guessed) that he had AIDS at the latest in early 1984, if not earlier. He worked without rest in order to finish what could have been, and in fact became his last two books.<sup>157</sup> And yet, even if he knew, the end that imposed itself on his project is difficult to relate to the project as such, whereas in the case of Nietzsche, it is not all that far fetched to relate thinking and madness -- especially since Nietzsche himself suggested this relation.<sup>158</sup> Moreover, Foucault's untimely death makes it somewhat difficult, although not impossible, to assess the status of his late thinking, his latest concepts and methods, in the context of his entire project. I shall argue, nevertheless, that the Foucault of the early 80s successfully handled the re-entry of his project into itself.

#### 49.

However, the most crucial difference between Nietzsche's and Foucault's intellectual trajectories, that is the difference which explains all the similarities, is also the most obvious of the differences one could list: not only are there precisely 100 years between their crises, but even more important: Foucault had read Nietzsche "by chance" in 1953, i.e. before he started working on what would later become his major publications.<sup>159</sup> *Maladie mentale et Personnalité* [Mental Illness and Personality], his very first book (1954), still remained basically a non-Nietzschean work and was, accordingly, later completely renounced by his author. Whenever Foucault referred to his "first book", he always meant *Folie et Déliraison*.<sup>160</sup> Foucault stated several times that the reading of Heidegger and Nietzsche provided the decisive "philosophical shock" for his thinking and that, in the end, the latter outweighed the former.<sup>161</sup> Nietzsche was, as he said, a "revelation"

to him. He "read him with a great passion and broke with [his] life, left [his] job in the asylum, left France" for "through Nietzsche, I had become a stranger to all that."<sup>162</sup> Foucault acknowledged that he had approached Nietzsche, "curious as it may seem, from a perspective of inquiry into the history of knowledge". Thus, although his serious reading of Nietzsche started with the *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, his relation to Nietzsche derived mostly from the texts written in the early 1880s, especially, I sense, from *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*.<sup>163</sup> There are, at least, four aspects of Nietzsche's influence on Foucault. First in terms of contents: Nietzsche became the determining experience for the abolition of the founding act of the subject.<sup>164</sup> By breaking with the "double tradition of phenomenology and marxism", it was the reading of Nietzsche that gave access to the questions which would guide Foucault's project.<sup>165</sup> Second in terms of style and commitment: the "challenge of Nietzsche" also meant a striving for the "maximum of philosophical intensity".<sup>166</sup> In this way, Nietzsche marked the beginning of Foucault's "desire to do personal work".<sup>167</sup> Third, Nietzsche's thinking, his manifesto on the return of the masks, not only functioned as an orientation for Foucault's inquiries, but was also available as an object of study, i.e. as a point which one could locate in the history of thought and which could therefore, in its strangeness, reveal something about that history.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, the point in which Nietzsche's project came to an end, madness, was precisely the topic from where Foucault departed.<sup>169</sup>

## 50.

Fourth and finally, what all this alludes to is that the circle underlying the Nietzschean perspective and its autocatalytic principle was present in Foucault's thinking and observing from the outset. Nietzsche caused, if you will, a first re-entry of Foucault's project into itself and thus brought it on its way. Soon after he had read Nietzsche, Foucault spoke frequently about a book he wanted to write about the philosopher.<sup>170</sup> The plan never materialized. Foucault lectured on Nietzsche -- so in 1969/70 at Vincennes in front of some 600 students - - but in fact wrote very little about him. In 1975, Foucault even remarked that he did not want to lecture on Nietzsche any more. But



this silence was only reciprocal to the importance Foucault assigned to Nietzsche. "The only valid tribute to thought such as Nietzsche's", so his argument, was "precisely to use it", not to permanently comment on it.<sup>171</sup> In his last interview, Foucault distinguishes three different types of thinkers: those he doesn't know, those he knows and talks about, and finally those he knows and does not talk about. One always had to preserve a few thinkers to work with. Thus, had he written on Nietzsche, he would have had to establish a distance to the latter and thereby would have closed a major source of inspiration.<sup>172</sup> In the preface to *Folie et Dérison*, Foucault had placed his own undertaking under "le soleil de la grande recherche nietzschéenne".<sup>173</sup> In his interviews, he frequently referred to the circular, Nietzschean link between his observations and self-observations. His theoretical work, Foucault explained, was always based on his own immediate experience, "always in relation to processes [he] saw taking place around [him]." He hoped, in this way, he could recognize "in the things [he] saw, in the institutions with which [he] dealt, in [his] relations with others [...] a few fragments of autobiography."<sup>174</sup> Foucault once located, although half-jokingly, the "nucleus of [his] theoretical desires" in the intense pre-war and war experience of his childhood (and his generation): "Our private life was really threatened" so that knowledge became a "means of surviving by understanding."<sup>175</sup> His choice of topics, especially his early interest in psychology and insanity, at the time were usually regarded as reflections of personal concerns.<sup>176</sup> In that Foucault's work unfolded from early on -- and perhaps already before he actually read Nietzsche -- out of this Nietzschean circle, his project was always to a high degree autonomous; pursued without much attention being paid to disciplinary allegiances.

## 51.

It is important to remember that the circularity of this perspective based on the mutual constitution of the known and the unknown presented a solution for Nietzsche's problems. His thinking entered the self-confirming circle in the early 1880s and then left it, if at all, only via what came to be seen as his madness. How did this circle, which after all had dissolved Nietzsche's crisis, lead to Foucault's crisis? How was

it possible that the very gesture which was a solution for one became a problem for the other thinker? It is here, I suggest, in the way the circle was employed, where the similarities and differences of the two projects intersect. The point is not just that Foucault was aware of the Nietzschean experience and thus might have seen little reason to repeat its fate. The point is rather that there was a fundamental *difference* in the way the *same* circular design was utilized. For one can follow a circle with two different, in fact opposite orientations: clockwise and counterclockwise, if you will. Whereas Nietzsche generalized towards the unknown society he was part of in order to provoke it to take care of itself, Michel Foucault frequently stated that it was *his own* transformation that was at stake in his observations. Foucault, in other words, never wrote a Also sprach Zarathustra even if he might have agreed to Zarathustra's silence.<sup>177</sup> The passages in his L'Archéologie du Savoir [The Archaeology of Knowledge], in which he alluded to this peculiar relation he had towards his work, soon became famous: Foucault's writings form a labyrinth "in which [he] can lose himself and appear at least to eyes that [he] will never have to meet again." He wrote in order to have no face.<sup>178</sup> In this way, he gave living example of his obstinate attempts to get out of the philosophy of the subject: he refused "to be tied to an identity by some conscience of self-knowledge."<sup>179</sup> His problem was, then, the transformation of one's self by one's own knowledge; he was motivated by that kind of curiosity "which would enable one to get free of oneself."<sup>180</sup> No doubt, writing makes those efforts possible and difficult at the same time: after all, it is a means to exemplify one's transformation, but precisely in this exemplification one leaves a trace which one is likely to become assigned to. "I started writing by chance. And once one has begun, one is a prisoner of this activity; it is impossible to escape."<sup>181</sup> This ambiguity is present in Foucault's trajectory from the outset. The early polemics against the notion of the "author", his persistent refusal to see discourse as a trace, as well as the proposed kinship between writing and death are facets of this ambiguity.<sup>182</sup> In fact, there was always the danger of self-destruction implicit in this continuous attempt of self-displacement. There was at least one attempt of suicide in 1948 and it is in line with Foucault's statements to consider writing as a kind of continuation of suicide by other means. He accepted that his discourse might become extinct just as the creature which was its carrier until



then.<sup>183</sup> In an interview in 1975, Foucault referred to the self-destructive potential of his work by describing his books as toolboxes that people could make use of "in order to short circuit or disqualify systems of power, including even possibly the ones my books come out of -- well, all the better."<sup>184</sup>

## 52.

This orientation of the Foucauldian perspective surfaces in his project also in the form of an imperative: "avoid, as much as possible, the universals of anthropology"; do "not accept anything of that order that is not strictly indispensable."<sup>185</sup> The point here is not that Foucault universally rejected the possibility of universals; to be sure, he was hostile to the idea as such and cultivated a "systematic scepticism" about anthropological universals, unitary necessities, general theories, totalization,<sup>186</sup> but in the end his position was a distinct indifference: he simply did not want to decide whether or not such universals exist. He struggled hard throughout his career in order to avoid precisely this decision as, whatever side -- yes or no -- he had picked, it would have eliminated an unforeseeable large set of possible transformations. Foucault did not mean to say that there were no subjects and no truths, but he studied the coming into being, i.e. the historical constitution of specific subjects and specific truths.<sup>187</sup> In other words, in the cases Foucault dealt with, the putting into play of universal forms was itself historical.<sup>188</sup> In fact, it seems fair to say that most of the occasionally monstrous criticisms Foucault encountered in his work was directed against things he had never claimed. In fact, if his discourse was to be a labyrinth and an opportunity for a continuous self-displacement, then Foucault had to keep it as open as possible. Every word he wrote bore the danger of an unnecessary commitment that could soon evolve into a burden.<sup>189</sup> Accordingly, Foucault liked to present his work as "game openings", as taking place between "unfinished abutments and anticipatory strings of dots".<sup>190</sup> He liked to open up spaces of research, to open up problems, and emphasized the necessity of a "demanding, prudent, 'experimental' attitude" within theoretical work.<sup>191</sup> In the preface to the German edition (1971) of Les Mots et les Choses, Foucault introduced his celebrated book as an unfinished

piece, full of gaps, as he wrote, which refer either to earlier works, or to works which are not yet finished or which even have not yet been started.<sup>192</sup> And that was his dream: a continuous changeable self-correcting working "mit langem Atem", dispersed and open to the reactions it provokes,<sup>193</sup> and supported by publishing houses for research which would show "work in motion", i.e. research in its hypothetical, provisional aspect.<sup>194</sup> Following the dynamics of his perspective, Foucault developed an intellectual claustrophobia.

### 53.

In order to see how this Foucauldian perspective could lead into a severe crisis, I need to go briefly into the actual evolution of his work, i.e. into the topics he dealt with and to explore how it became increasingly difficult for him to live up to his maxim -- to be always able to think differently from what he thought before.<sup>195</sup> For if that was his aim, a permanent access to otherness, to the different, became a major requirement of his project. Somewhere in what he observed, there had to be the opening of an escape route; the assignment was to permanently create and preserve the possibility to dissociate oneself from one's thinking. In practice, this meant to locate one's position always as close as possible to the borderlines, to the limits of what one sees as the space of possible experiences. Most likely, the route to otherness starts at the borders, at the extremities of the space one is currently exploring. The search for those limits, their conceptualisation and the play on those limits make up one of those themes which were present throughout Foucault's project.<sup>196</sup>

### 54.

In Folie et Dérason, Foucault establishes the possibility of otherness in the way he relates insanity to reason: "The constitution of madness as a mental illness, at the end of the 18th century, affords the evidence of a broken dialogue, posits the separation as already effected, and thrusts into oblivion all those stammered, imperfect words without fixed syntax in which the exchange between madness and



reason was made."<sup>197</sup> Thus it is the Western, "our", culture which creates its own limits via the exclusion of otherness. Foucault struggles with the difficult logic behind this observation: reason appears as one of the two sides of a division *and* as its all-encompassing whole which created that division; reason, if you will, is its own *reason*. The division, as Foucault points out, is absolute: the absoluteness of a division like this is part of the prize subjects have to pay in order to be able to speak the truth about themselves.<sup>198</sup> And yet Foucault's own discourse depends in those formative years on that possibility to have access to that otherness without losing syntax. Madness must not become absolutely silent. And in fact it does not: "Ruse and new triumph of madness: the world [...] must justify itself before madness, since in its struggles and agonies it measures itself by the excess of works like those of Nietzsche, of Van Gogh, of Artaud." Foucault plays on this paradox he is part of: "In our time man has no truth except in the enigma of the madman, *who he both is and is not*."<sup>199</sup> This, if you will, *ambiguity* reflects one of the difficulties of Foucault's project: he needs the absolutely different in order to be able to think differently, but in order to get to this absolutely different place, it must be linked, through an escape route, to its opposite -- i.e. to the identical. The dream and the desires are presented as further examples of those nearest and most remote places of otherness, whose externality gives Foucault's project its possibility.

## 55.

On his way to Les Mots et les Choses, Foucault moved through his escape route to the place which is now different from the different - to the identical. Whereas in Folie et Dérailson he had wanted to be the "archaeologist of all those threatening but rejected experiences" in order to "speak of the experience of madness", "to rediscover it" and even "let it speak itself",<sup>200</sup> he now became the "ethnologist of his own culture", the one who alienated the identical from within by confronting it with otherness.<sup>201</sup> A bizarre categorization of animals, allegedly taken from a "certain chinese encyclopedia" and found by Foucault in a text of Jorge Luis Borges, serves as a starting point. For the stark impossibility of thinking in terms of those categories leads to

a fundamental question: "But what is it impossible to think, and what kind of impossibility are we faced with here?"<sup>202</sup> The book's answer is implicitly given in its depiction of that realm of thought -- between the fundamental codes of a culture and its philosophical and scientific reflection -- which eventually surfaces as the foundation of the taken-for-granted codes and *thereby* invalidates their self-evidence. The impossibilities of thought are defined, then, by those "silent orders", which function until they become "visible".<sup>203</sup>

56.

Velasquez, in his famous painting Las Maninas (1656), did not dare to show both the act of representing "sovereign" individuals *and* those individuals. The painting shows Velasquez painting the Spanish king, Philipp IV., and his wife, but it neither shows the latter nor the front of Velasquez' (painted) canvas. He solves the dilemma by re-introducing the sovereigns as reflections of a mirror painted in the back scene of the ongoing representation, so that they are again present only as representations while being represented. For the great Spanish painter, a complete representation of the act of representing was neither possible nor admissible.<sup>204</sup> The threshold to modernity, according to Foucault, lies precisely in the presumptuousness of that gesture of representing representation, i.e. of objectifying the subject: the sovereign becomes at the same time subdued.<sup>205</sup> Since then, representation closes itself off from the world in that it tries *in advance* to represent the representing subject *as reason* for representation.<sup>206</sup> The representing subject locks itself into limitations and finiteness. This gesture marks the origin of that "rift in the order of things" which is called "man" -- a rift, as Foucault emphasizes, not more than 200 years old and, just as other rifts, likely to be erased "like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea."<sup>207</sup>

57.

The previous two sections are complementary in that they reveal how Foucault's questions and his position slowly approach what he



observes; it is as if the circle nurturing his project slowly contracts to a point. For how close is the idea to think the limits of thinking, i.e. to think the act of thinking to the idea to represent the act of representing? In other words, how close is the idea to think the limits of thought to the establishment of those limits? Under tense political circumstances in the late 60s, this question soon evoked political terms: if those limits, those systems exist which are part of discourse and yet inaccessible as taken for granted, where is then the starting point for political creativity, for invention? For progressive intervention? It is in this form, as a *political* problem, in which Foucault for the first time encounters the danger that the circular link relating observation and self-observation in his project might eventually collapse to a point. For Foucault, this question must have seemed legitimate as the possibility of self-transformation was also at the heart of his work. And yet, in that he responds by engaging in large methodological undertakings -- culminating in L'Archéologie du Savoir (1969) --, his very attempts to dissipate the danger and to dissolve the problem only reconfirm it. By reflecting on the possibility of change, of transformation, Foucault implicitly reflects on the very possibility of continuing his own project. In other words, the dynamics of the project re-entered into the project: what had been the taken for granted basis of his motivation to work as hard as he did now became an explicit concern, a problem, for that work. And in this specific case, this constellation had to turn out as a dead end, for if the possibility of change is problematic, then no change will occur until the problem will have been solved. "There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all."<sup>208</sup>

## 58.

Foucault tried hard to avoid this path of thinking -- and precisely thereby entered it. As an immediate response, he claims that the issue of change was indeed at the centre of Les Mots et les Choses. What he tried to do was "to introduce the diversity of systems and the play of discontinuities into the history of discourses."<sup>209</sup> However, much of the methodological writings of that period -- late 60s, early 70s -- failed

to provide late justifications of previous works, but seemed to have played the role of programmes. L'Archéologie du Savoir, too, was at first designed as an explanation of earlier studies, but then turned out to be, in parts, a radical self-critique.<sup>210</sup> Foucault's inaugural lecture at the Collège de France (December 1970), L'Ordre du Discourse [Orders of Discourse], continues this series of programmatic texts -- each of which seems to invalidate the previous. All these attempts, which I will not analyze in detail, finally remain inconclusive: in the preface to the German edition of Les Mots et les Choses (1971), Foucault withdraws. The book was, after all, nothing but a comparative study of strictly limited scope; the problem of causality and therefore of change had to be bracketed as he felt incapable of offering a solution.<sup>211</sup>

59.

In the meantime, perhaps as a consequence of the inconclusiveness of his efforts, Foucault tackles the question where it was posed first: in politics. Apart from a short and, finally, unhappy affiliation with the Communist Party (1950-53), Foucault did not belong to any political movement. However, the first half of the 70s sees Foucault as the militant, the activist, closely and passionately involved in concrete struggles -- as if he had to prove to himself and others that he was everything but paralysed by his thinking. The Foucault who seemed prepared to battle with militant communists and who was seen throwing rocks at the police was also the one Georges Dumézil never believed in.<sup>212</sup> To this period corresponds the increasing importance of the term "power" in Foucault's writings up to the point where this concept came to be regarded as *his* major theme. Still, in this power-period, Foucault only repeats a gesture that was implicitly there already in Folie et Dérailson and was explicitly discussed in Les Mots et les Choses. In the former, it was reason which re-introduced itself into a distinction between itself and otherness and thereby had to take itself for granted. The same kind of presumptuousness marked the beginning of modernity, where the possibility of knowledge became itself an object of knowledge and precisely thereby turned transcendental. Surveiller et Punir as well as many interviews of that period replace or, if you will,



subsume the categories of reason and knowledge under the headline of "power" but maintain the peculiar logic Foucault observed earlier: disciplinary power turns subjects into objects whose existence then justifies disciplinary power.<sup>213</sup> Moreover, the objectified subject produced by the logic of Bentham's panopticum becomes a kind of genealogical precondition of the modern human sciences.<sup>214</sup>

60.

Power introduces distinctions -- it subjectifies -- and then re-enters the distinctions on one of their sides -- it objectifies. The limits of power are indeed its pillars; hence, if there are no limits, then there cannot be otherness. Foucault's power-period only repeated and in fact demarcated sharply a path of thinking which he had already covered before. Perhaps even more so than the truly radical and merciless self-critique which opens the lectures of 76, La Volonté de Savoir, Foucault's next book, marks the visible outbreak of the crisis that has been lurking in the background at least since Les Mots et les Choses. In fact, as he acknowledged later, the outburst of activity Foucault announced on its back cover was a sign of crisis rather than evidence of its solution. He commits himself to a kind of naive positivism pursued in a project that perhaps would last for several years -- a presumptuousness which was nothing but a way of giving up. A prescription of constancy and steadiness seemed to have replaced the search for self-transformation.<sup>215</sup> The book itself confirms this impression. It gives a rather blunt expression of what Foucault had implicitly stated much earlier: the one place for the great heroic resistance against power does not exist.<sup>216</sup> Again this is the political version of the problems Foucault had with his own project -- with himself. The statement looks like a delayed but nevertheless radical self-critique, which is directed not just towards earlier works, but also against his recent political activism. It reflects Foucault's attempt to distance himself from many who, fighting against repression, might have seen Foucault on their side. But, according to the latter, the "repressive hypothesis" is just part of a game in which power and pleasure mutually constitute each other.<sup>217</sup> Those who play this game, those who pose against repression only profit from the "speaker's

benefit" -- the provision of which is precisely the function of the game.<sup>218</sup> No doubt, in this book Foucault stages his own loss and lack of orientation. He publicly dismantles the position he thought he had spoken from, but is as yet unable to indicate an alternative. The conclusion one is left with is, then, that the book, too, is part of what it describes, i.e. part of that game that provides benefits for speakers and writers. Occasionally, Foucault falls back to his earlier position whereby the body and the desires form a basis for resistance.<sup>219</sup> However, in general, the bluntness of his style, his all-too over-confident words, the superabundance of evaluating adjectives, and the striking repetitiveness of the book fail to cover a fundamental confusion.<sup>220</sup>

# 61.

What was at stake in Foucault's crisis? The necessity of the permanent access to possibilities of self-displacement corresponded in his writings to the dismantling of the sovereign subject as the privileged source of causes. The discontinuities Foucault described in his books were then located at the level of those "silent orders", i.e. at the level of things taken for granted and therefore, to an unspecified degree, inaccessible for the observing subject. To be sure, Foucault never negated the possibility of change, but rejected "extra-historical mechanisms" such as the "nimble bottle-imp of mind" as means to fill up what others perceived as the "void of discontinuity".<sup>221</sup> And so, as "the 'I' had exploded", Foucault discovered another passion: "the passion for concepts and for what [he called] 'systems'".<sup>222</sup> The title of his chair at the Collège de France, "History of Systems of Thought", was suggested by Foucault himself.<sup>223</sup> By giving up the philosophy of the subject, Foucault gave up the self-evidence of causality: change might be possible but the very question of how it was to be brought about became a problem. For who is doing the struggling if not subjects? "[...] this is what is preoccupying me. I'm not too sure what the answer is", Foucault responded in 1977.<sup>224</sup> The problem, however, was not just political; it was personal as it was about the one who was struggling in and with his project. For the project now had to investigate the possibility of its own dynamics: it became a problem for



itself. The circle of observation and self-observation had collapsed to a point and lost its centrifugal power.

62.

The rejection of an extra-historical causality opens the question of how history is able to generate change out of itself. In most abstract terms, *the possibility of internal access to novelty* is the problem which emerged at the place where the sovereign subject had reigned over the empire of causes. And it is ironic to reflect upon its similarity, but also its difference to the problem of Nietzsche, which was, after all, the possibility of the internal generation of beliefs. However, for Foucault the puzzle is particularly delicate because he cannot give an answer as general as the question: a *general* theory of change would, in some sense, remove forever the possibility of change for his own undertaking. In fact, there was not just a necessity to tackle and possibly solve this problem, but there was also the danger that the solution of the problem would amount to a dis-solution of the project.

Part 2

63.

Foucault's self-critique of 1976 was not just purely destructive but contained a germ of what he considered to be an alternative perspective on power. For centuries Western societies privileged a kind of analysis which understood power "in purely negative terms of law and prohibition".<sup>225</sup> Power, in this view, is a repressing force, a force which refuses, limits, obstructs, censors -- in short, "power is what says No".<sup>226</sup> Part of Foucault's self-critique was that, at least in *Folie et Dérason* as well as in his programmatic lecture *L'Ordre du Discourse*, he, too, had unwisely and without much reflection followed this juridical conception of power.<sup>227</sup> In the second half of the 70s, he explains that

it was the concrete experience of his work in and for the Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons (GIP), starting from 1971/72, that led him to regard this conception as inadequate.<sup>228</sup> Moreover, he came to think of the thesis of a juridical, negative, repressive power as being itself a result of power. For its purpose was to impose the narrow form of transgression on any challenge of power and to reduce the fundamental operation of power to a speech-act: "Thou shalt not."<sup>229</sup> Power as domination, "its latent nature and its brutality", was thereby concealed by a discourse which kept on emphasising law, rights, sovereignty even after the 17th and 18th centuries had introduced new mechanisms of power -- surveillance, disciplining -- which were incompatible with the traditional relations of sovereignty.<sup>230</sup>

#### 64.

As an alternative to the Western insistence on negative power, Foucault suggests to understand power as a *productive* network of *relations* which run through the *whole* social body.<sup>231</sup> Foucault replaces the juxtapositions sovereignty/obedience and repression/struggle as the predominant approaches to the phenomenon of power with an analytic of relations of domination. The objective of this generalization was to provide a concept of power which presupposed less than previous concepts and which thereby left room for an analysis of how the traditional models came to be taken-for-granted. Foucault's "power" differs from the traditional model in at least three related aspects. First, there is the new emphasis on power as a network of relations, as an open, "more-or-less organized", "more-or-less co-ordinated" cluster of relations.<sup>232</sup> For the societies installed in the 19th century, these networks are centre-less: "power is no longer substantially identified with an individual who possesses or exercises it by right of birth; it becomes a machinery that no one owns."<sup>233</sup> And, second, these networks cover the whole of society so that power "is 'always already there'"; in particular: "one is never 'outside' it".<sup>234</sup> Finally, and made necessary by the previous point, Foucault frequently stresses the productive aspects of power. In fact, he presents the 6-volume-project on sexuality precisely as a study in the "re-elaboration of the theory of power" for 'sexuality' was "far more of a positive



product of power than power was ever repression of sexuality.<sup>235</sup> The point is, then, that the traditional objects of power are indeed its products: power produces knowledge,<sup>236</sup> individuals, subjects,<sup>237</sup> pleasure, discourses,<sup>238</sup> and most important: truth. The planned book Le Pouvoir de la Vérité, announced on the back cover of La Volonté de Savoir, presumably was to be about the circular relationship between truth and power which Foucault established in early 1976: "We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth."<sup>239</sup> Truth was "not outside power", but "a thing of this world" produced by "virtue of multiple forms of constraint", and inducing "regular effects of power".<sup>240</sup> For, "in the end, we are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power".<sup>241</sup> Ultimately, he adds, the political question "is not error, illusion, alienated consciousness or ideology; it is truth itself."<sup>242</sup>

## 65.

At that time, there was no way for Foucault to avoid questions about the political implications of his reading of power. After all, he developed these ideas precisely at the as yet unnoticed end of a period which was used to see him as a spokesman of resistance and struggle. On several occasions, he is pressed to explain why his perspective does not simply inaugurate the almightiness of power and remove forever the possibility of resistance to repression. Foucault responds in a defensive way. On the one hand, the universalisation of power meant that "there are no relations of power without resistances", which now are "all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised; resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real."<sup>243</sup> If power is everywhere, then "subversive recodifications of power relations", too, are possible everywhere.<sup>244</sup> And yet, on the other hand, what all this means in positive terms is left open, to be decided in the future: a "new form of right" was needed, "anti-disciplinarian" and at the same time "liberated from the principle of sovereignty".<sup>245</sup> Adequate forms of

political analysis and criticism, *new* strategies for the modification of force relations, as well as *new* forms of politicisation "have in a large measure still to be invented".<sup>246</sup> But this play between standard questions and Foucault's evasive responses only reveals that the change in Foucault's perspective was politically motivated only to the extent that thinking in terms of repression had turned out to be a dead end. What was at stake for Foucault, at first, was the *beginning of a search* for a new area of research, a new line of questioning which, in contrast to the "repressive hypothesis", would be autonomous in that its "validity is not dependent on the approval of established regimes of thought".<sup>247</sup> To be sure, he never lost sight of politics; but now the political implications would have to be the results of work which was still to be done.

66.

Whenever he talks about this new, enlarged conception of power, Foucault emphasises that contents and implications of his suggestions need further explorations. All that was accomplished so far was, at most, that he had got rid of a blind passenger of his work: a pre-given (negative) understanding of power. But the giving-up of the traditional juridical view also meant that he had to start anew. "To say that 'everything is political' is to affirm this ubiquity of relations of force and their immanence in a political field; but this is to give oneself the task, which as yet has scarcely even been outlined, of disentangling this indefinite knot."<sup>248</sup> The assignment was nothing less but to go back to the history of the West, now without compass, and to re-establish what power had meant concretely. In order to arrive at an understanding of how the specific form of power prevalent in modern societies was implemented, how relations of power emerge, change, diversify, etc., one had to start again from the scratch. And the only guidance the new theoretical frame provided was precisely this: start from the scratch; do not in advance restrict the range of your vision, because if power is everywhere, the clue could be everywhere as well. The new concept of power was not yet the answer to the crisis. Also in Foucault's self-understanding, it merely outlined a tremendous task and prescribed discipline for at least six volumes.



Foucault took a sabbatical year in 1977 in order to make progress on the sexuality series and, more important, in order to advance an empirical foundation of a new perspective on power. Foucault's first lectures after the break clearly differ in style and in scope from the previous ones: in broad empirical studies, he tries to regain orientation.<sup>249</sup> In 1978 and 79 he discusses topics and classical concepts such as security, pastoral power, *raison d'état*, police, state, civil society, interest, population, sovereignty in puzzling and new contexts.<sup>250</sup> And yet, the trace that he leaves on his way does not seem to give any indication of an end or a beginning. He turns every stone, one topic smoothly leads to another. Occasionally he stops, pausing for a breath, pondering on whether the issue just arrived at might serve as a proper starting point for his analytics of power and, thus, as a point of attack where change could be provoked. The notion of "bio-power", already introduced in *La Volonté de Savoir*,<sup>251</sup> crops up again and again, most likely as an attempt to asymmetrize the almighty power-phenomena. After all, power did have to take into account phenomena of life -- but, as Foucault became soon aware of, thereby was able to increase its efficiency. Foucault keeps on postponing a proper treatment of the concept as it would have been difficult for him, I sense, to discuss bio-power without committing himself to some ontology of human nature.<sup>252</sup> The term "governmentality" for some time appears to have marked a new anchoring device for his project, but was then left in a somewhat underdeveloped version.<sup>253</sup> Still, at some point, Foucault considered governmental rationalities rather than institutions to be the proper focus for resistance or rebellion.<sup>254</sup> The major result of his tour d'horizon, however, is a renewed, and perhaps now confirmed, accentuation of the concept of "truth": "Isn't the most general of political problems the problem of truth?"<sup>255</sup> At the end of the first lecture in 1980, Foucault announces that the theme "government by truth" would now substitute the concept "power/knowledge".<sup>256</sup> The concept of truth, it seemed, marked a sufficiently general level of thought which was difficult to surpass.

With this shift of emphasis, Foucault gains access to a new way of organizing his entire work. Since Folie et Dérason, he had been concerned with the different modes by which, "in our culture", truth can be established about human beings: first, there are modes which give themselves the status of a science; examples of those were studied in Naissance de la Clinique [The Birth of the Clinic] and Les Mots et les Choses. Second, there are modes which produce truth by "dividing practices"; Folie et Dérason and Surveiller et Punir dealt with those. Third and finally, there are modes by which human beings establish truth about themselves; those "technologies of the self", as he self-critically observed, had been neglected so far in his project, yet became more and more relevant for his ongoing work in the framework of the sexuality series.<sup>257</sup> Later Foucault would also present those categories in somewhat different terms. They referred, then, to the modes human beings are made into subjects; to the ways in which subjects become objects of possible knowledge; to the way truth was constituted about the subject; and finally they evolved into the "three axis of experience: truth, power, ethics".<sup>258</sup> In fact, in that he structured the concept of experience in this way, he was led to claim that, although all his books emphasized one or the other of those axis, "each time [he has] tried to show how the two other elements were present, what role they played, and how each one was affected by the transformations in the other two."<sup>259</sup> I shall not go into the subtle distinctions between the titles of Foucault's categories, but merely want to point out that, in the early 80s, Foucault was able to look at his work, if not yet as a unity, then at least as something that *could be given a unity*. The three categories he had established lasted as a stable representation of the work he had done since the mid 50s. Moreover, this new perspective on his work, adopted five years after his proclamation that there was no coherence in his undertakings, gave clear hints as to where and how this unity was to be created. In fact, the categorization proved to be an important operator for the specific way in which Foucault's project continued: a shift of focus towards self-relations was needed and therefore, in some (some!) sense, a re-introduction of the subject.



As a cause and effect of this conceptual shift towards truth, the series on the History of Sexuality was completely redesigned. Only shortly after finishing La Volonté de Savoir, Foucault found it impossible to pursue the project as outlined. There are at least two obvious reasons why he changed his mind. First, the idea that "the time had now come when [he] could [...] simply unwind what was in [his] head, confirming it by empirical research", i.e. the idea that he could commit himself to a predictable work over a longer period of time, turned out to be -- predictably! -- as wrong as it could be: he "very nearly died of boredom writing those books."<sup>260</sup> Later, in 1984, Foucault was not able to explain why he had announced with such ease a project of that kind and scope; in fact, he admitted that he did not even want to know why he had run "counter to [his] usual practice."<sup>261</sup> The second reason mainly refers to the dynamics of Foucault's research on sexuality. The idea had been to do historical studies on the notion of sexuality and the development of the specific knowledge behind it from the 16th to the 19th century. However, Foucault soon had to notice that he would miss an important question if he did not start his inquiry at an earlier moment in history: "Why had we made sexuality into a moral experience? Why is there this ethical concern, which, depending on the moment, appears more or less important than the moral attention paid to other realms of individual or collective existence, such as feeding behaviours or the discharge of one's civic duties?"<sup>262</sup> If Foucault had insisted on pursuing the project as originally planned, he more or less would have had to take for granted that discourse on sexuality evokes moral principles. But the whole point of the project was, after all, to inaugurate a line of questioning which would be autonomous to the extent that it does not depend on established regimes of thought. His earlier plan to start the analysis in the 16th century had to turn out as unsuitable since it would have required, again!, a prior objectification. The work, in other words, would have been based on an assumption which was not result of the work.

And so Foucault begins to search for a proper starting point for his analysis. In 1978, his course at the Collège still focused on the 16th century, whereas in 1980, Foucault lectures on the 3rd and 4th century. The course of 1982, *L'Herméneutique du Sujet*, mainly deals with the first two centuries, until he finally, in 1983/84, jumps back even further into the 4th and 5th century BC.<sup>263</sup> The major result and justification of his time travel is that the themes of austerity usually ascribed to christianity were already present in pagan culture, although in a somewhat different way.<sup>264</sup> The classical concept of the care of the self now marks the place where a certain number of ascetic techniques developed, which were later transformed and thus not invented by christianity: "We are not talking about a moral rupture between tolerant antiquity and austere christianity."<sup>265</sup> One of the reasons why Foucault tried so hard to illuminate the transition from antiquity to christianity might have been that, by emphasizing the continuity behind the transition, he was able to continue and in fact *correct* Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral*.<sup>266</sup> According to Foucault, the theme of the care of the self occurs at first in the socratic-platonic period (Alcibiades) as a general category of techniques of the self, which contained the obtainment of self-knowledge as a consequence. In this framework, the care of the self is what allows one to govern oneself and *then* to govern others. Thus, taking care of oneself reflected political ambitions. In a first shift, this orientation towards the government of others disappears. The first two centuries mark the time of the *autofinalisation* of the care of the self in that the latter becomes an end in itself. At the same time, the philosophical question of the possibility of truth evolves into a question of spirituality: How does the self has to work upon itself in order to obtain access to truth? This set of practices and questions makes up a line of practice and thought to which christianity later connects: the obtainment of self-knowledge not only becomes predominant as compared to other techniques of the self, but it also is now oriented towards the renunciation of the self. The christian self is what is to be renounced and not what is to be striven for. In other words, the practices of the self "whose aim was to constitute oneself as the worker of the beauty of one's own life" were diverted by christianity



"towards the hermeneutics of self and the deciphering of oneself as a subject of desire."<sup>267</sup>

71.

Foucault did begin to work on two books and almost finished one on early christianity, but then, as a result of his attempt to write a preface, put it aside once he saw he had missed a decisive question. In early 1983, Foucault's work and publication schedules looked as follows. As number two of the History of Sexuality, L'Usage des Plaisirs would show that the same codes concerning sexual ethics which existed in the Roman empire were already present in the 4th century BC -- the difference being that earlier they were related to aesthetics and not, as later, to normalization. The book would contain a chapter on the technology of the self; its time frame would end just before the rise of christianity. The third volume of the series would be a revised version of the christianity book, entitled Les Aveux de la Chair [The Confession of the Flesh], and would cover christian technologies of the self. In addition, Foucault planned a book exclusively devoted to the notion of the self, which would include an article on Plato's Alcibiades as one of the first ancient texts to develop the theme of the care of the self. This book, entitled Le Souci de Soi, was supposed to appear separate from the sexuality series.<sup>268</sup> However, the discussion of Plato soon was amplified and Greek antiquity became the centre of L'Usage des Plaisirs. The thinkers of the first two centuries, i.e. those who wrote during the blossom-time of the culture of the self: Seneca, Plutarch, Epictetus, and Galen, filled Le Souci de Soi, which mutated into the third volume of the History of Sexuality, only followed by Les Aveux de la Chair as fourth and indeed final treatise in the series. Foucault briefly considered the possibility of publishing all his studies on sexuality in one big volume of some 800 pages, but finally decided against the idea since publication would have had to be delayed until the project was completely finished. He finished correcting proof for L'Usage des Plaisirs and Le Souci de Soi in May 1984 and thought that the final volume could come out in October.<sup>269</sup>

The theme of the care of the self was precisely the missing piece which made the mosaic complete and thereby revealed the entire picture: now there were colours, shapes, silhouettes, patterns, and above all a new unity which did not require a frame! Moreover, and perhaps to Foucault's own surprise, it allowed him to reintroduce the idea of the subject in a way which did not disturb but in fact strengthened the composition of the mosaic. It became possible to introduce the subject *not* as the frame, but as part of that moving picture: it had its place but still not as the condition of the possibility of experience. The Cartesian moment which had justified the subject's immediate access to truth through its being a subject was just one specific moment in a long history in which subject and truth have been mutually and cyclically constituted.<sup>270</sup> The history of the subject is *not* the history of an event -- an insight which partly explains the change in Foucault's writing style in the late 70s and early 80s.<sup>271</sup> To be sure the refusal to accept the subject as a substance had been at the heart of Foucault's undertaking from the outset, but as long as he focused on modernity, his refusal must have looked even to him more as an intuition than as a result. The ancient techniques of the self showed however, that the subject "is not just constituted in the play of symbols, it is constituted in real practices -- *historically analyzable* practices."<sup>272</sup> And the possibility of a profound transformation of those practices constitutes, then, a *historical fact*, too.<sup>273</sup> For Foucault, the time travel backwards offered a "certain theoretical advantage" in that it helped him to *spare* certain theoretical considerations.<sup>274</sup> Finally, the subject Foucault discovered in this way turned out to be much less frightening than he might have thought. In fact, the way he described what he had found resembled too closely what he had always said about his own undertaking: the self-formation of the subject was "an exercise of self upon self by which one tries to work out, *to transform one's self* and to attain a certain mode of being."<sup>275</sup>



In this way, the discovery of the ethics of the care for the self solved a very specific problem for Foucault: he now could talk about the subject without objectifying it, without limiting its possibilities. He could resume talking without giving up his silence. It was this theme which gave him the opportunity to say something he was not able to say before; it was not just but *also* a language that Foucault discovered. His complex, all-too subtle style of writing, the hiding places which he painstakingly constructed in his sentences dissolved. It seems as if he finally felt more at ease with using words. The excitement about the new findings soon superseded whatever interest there might have remained in the question of power. Foucault's last text on power is entitled "*The Subject and Power*" (1982) and begins with the observation that the subject, and not power, has been the general theme of his approach from the outset.<sup>276</sup> What is striking about the text is that it does not add anything fundamentally new to what Foucault had said on power at a time when he thought that was his major issue. Power is still rooted deep in the social nexus; a society without power remains nothing but an abstraction.<sup>277</sup> Just as in his interviews of 1976/77, relationships of power presuppose freedom as a condition of their functioning: power can be exercised only over free subjects.<sup>278</sup> In lack of alternatives, the escape route had to be built into the concept: "For if it is true that at the heart of power relations and as a permanent condition of their existence there is an insubordination and a certain essential obstinacy on the part of the principles of freedom, then there is no relationship of power without the means of escape or possible flight. Every power relationship implies, in potentia, a strategy for struggle."<sup>279</sup> He adds a distinction between relationships of power and states of domination in which an individual or groups of individuals manage to block a field of relations of power. Liberation is, then, a liberation from domination, not from power; liberation means to "open up new relationships of power, which have to be controlled by practices of liberty."<sup>280</sup> Yet again, liberation inaugurates nothing but relationships of power -- a gesture of thought which can be traced back at least to *La Volonté de Savoir*. In that Foucault, after six years of intensive work, simply repeats what should have been the *starting* point of nothing less than a re-elaboration of the Western understanding of

power, he confirmed that his universalisation of power had been the beginning of the end of his interest in the topic. For to see power relations everywhere was a theoretical response to the self-imposed requirement of not again being taken in by any pre-given conceptualisation of power. To universalise power was the last thing he could say before leaving the topic altogether. In particular, after 1976, Foucault never changed his mind on power: *there is no exit*.<sup>281</sup> On the contrary, his reintroduction of the subject even includes self-relations into an all-encompassing chain which connects power relations, governmental rationalities, the government of oneself and others.<sup>282</sup> The subject provided a solution for Foucault *not* by revealing an immediate way out; in some sense, the dead end still remained a dead end. But, as I will explain later, with the reintroduction of the subject, the space limited by the dead end becomes *potentially infinite*. And for the fish in the ocean, acknowledging the emptiness of the proposition that the ocean it lives in is a prison, opens up the possibility to escape from that very prison: "Power is not an evil."<sup>283</sup>

#### 74.

Foucault's half-hearted attempts to finally close the power-chapter only reveal that it has never been the central chapter of his life-book: "At the limit, I would say that power as an autonomous question, does not interest me." He emphasized that he "in no way" had wanted to construct a general theory of power; nor was he interested in an "analysis of power as it exists today."<sup>284</sup> After all, the problem power/knowledge turned out to be merely "an instrument allowing the analysis -- in a way that seemed to [him] to be the most exact -- of the problem of the relationships between subject and games of truth."<sup>285</sup> But the point Foucault made in his late interviews is even more fundamental: essentially, his work was not political. He was convinced, then, that the fact that he had been "situated in most of the squares of the political checkerboard" without settling down in one particular area of that board did not reflect the incompetence of those who tried to situate him, but ultimately must have had something to do with him. He agreed that what interested him was "much more morals than politics or, in any case, politics as an ethics."<sup>286</sup> Foucault simply did not want



to deliver the exit to this power-less world of otherness because he could not. For Foucault, this was the opposite of a failure; it was *his* victory: he did not break his silence. *To direct others, to govern others presupposes a prior objectification*; one cannot define otherness without imposing limits onto the identical, i.e. onto the present world: "It is impossible to direct man without operation in truth." Foucault was able to *analyze* those objectifications but was and had always been unable to *participate* in them. By maintaining his silence, i.e. by refusing to participate, Foucault finally found his very personal otherness.

## 75.

Therefore, the entire field of self-relations must have seemed particularly interesting to Foucault: "The idea of the bios as a material for an aesthetic piece of art is something which fascinates me. The idea also that ethics can be a very strong structure of existence, without any relation with the juridical per se, with an authoritarian system, with a disciplinary structure. All that is very interesting."<sup>287</sup> To be sure, self-relations presuppose objectification as much as any other field of experience. But they are specific in that the establishment and maintenance of those relations cannot be anything but a continuous self-referential and recursive process -- i.e. a process in which thought and practice or, if you will, truth and the subject are cyclically co-constituted.<sup>288</sup> Apparently, Foucault needed to study sexuality, which he understood as the ultimate and original form of self-relations,<sup>289</sup> in order to discover this circularity. And it is the circle and its peculiar geometry which provided a solution to Foucault's problems. The circle is bound; it does not provide an exit, but still knows neither an end nor a beginning and thus reflects endlessness. Combined with the renewed emphasis on truth, the discovery of the circle translates into two propositions. First, nothing leads outside truth; there is no strategy exterior to it. "We escape domination of truth not by playing an external game, but by playing another game, another set."<sup>290</sup> Second, "the task of telling the truth is an endless labour" and, if that is so, this could only mean that "there is always the possibility, in a given game of truth, to discover something else and to more or less change such and such a rule and sometimes even the totality of [a] game of truth."<sup>291</sup> It is in

this circle where Foucault finally found enough space to locate himself; the late self-descriptions of Foucault's project unfolded out of this circle.

76.

In 1980, Foucault declared that he had never met any "intellectuals"; the very word struck him as "odd" because, for him, intellectuals simply didn't exist. He had met "people who write novels, others who treat the sick. People who work in economics and others who write electronic music. [He had] met people who teach, people who paint, and people of whom [he had] never really understood what they do. But intellectuals never."<sup>292</sup> In the spring of 1984, only a few months before his death, Foucault claimed this very title of the intellectual for himself; moreover it was precisely because he was an intellectual, and not just an academic, that he could not write the History of Sexuality according to his plans of 1976. Foucault's own ethics had now become the new *raison d'être* of the intellectual: "to make oneself permanently capable of detaching oneself from oneself. The circle of truth and its endlessness, which is both a completeness as well as a permanent incompleteness, provided room for this activity for this *practice*: "I would like it to be an elaboration of self by self, a studious transformation, a slow, arduous process of change, *guided by a constant concern for truth*."<sup>293</sup> And that was the point: one could trust truth -- not because it would lead to the one and only possible solution (which would be a dead end); but because, on the contrary, it could always be questioned and because it always questions.

77.

All these shifts of perspective, the alternation and oscillation of concepts did not occur, of course, in a neat sequential order as the previous sections might suggest. All this happened simultaneously in a highly non-linear fashion, and yet it seems as if it was not without purpose, not without direction: the more Foucault struggled, the more he tried to get rid of himself, the more he had to realize that he might actually find himself in this very undertaking. *It is through the theme of*



*the care for the self as a practice that Foucault's project re-entered itself.* Foucault's trajectory, indeed, is full of ironies. For was it not precisely this re-entry that he had wanted to avoid? This confrontation with himself? "Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are."<sup>294</sup> However, precisely in this refusal he re-discovered himself, and at least for some time, until his death, seemed to have refrained from refusing. And is it not all-too understandable that for this radical and yet also smooth shift of perspective, which in strictly logical terms must remain unjustified, he would need almost 8 years; that he would have to go through an intellectual and personal crisis, which he perhaps was able to understand and acknowledge only after he had solved it? As if he had worked all those years -- silently, blindly, irresistibly, unwillingly, involuntarily -- only in order to arrive at this point of re-entry.

## 78.

In late 82, Foucault indicated that, after having studied subsequently (1) "the relations we have to truth through scientific knowledge", (2) "the relationships we have to others through those strange strategies and power relationships", and (3) the relations we have to ourselves, his trajectory would now lead him back to the first issue, to his point of departure, and thereby bend into a circle.<sup>295</sup> However, he did more or something else than that. For the re-entry meant precisely that he would now have access to the entirety of his work, i.e. that he could begin to thematize what it was that kept the three axes of his work together. This move was implicit in Foucault's discussion of the notion of *parrhesia* [παρρησία], which refers to the various practices of "truth-telling" as they occurred from about 400 B.C. in Greek literature (Euripides) up to the fifth century A.D. in the patristic texts (St. John Chrysostom).<sup>296</sup> In Euripides' texts, *parrhesia* refers to a relationship between the speaker and what he says. If a speaker uses *parrhesia*, he emphasises that he in fact believes what he says, i.e. that, by saying what he says, he makes a commitment to the contents of the words spoken: "I am the one who thinks this and that to be true".<sup>297</sup> For the speaker, this commitment entails a risk because, by making this commitment, he accepts that he could be

made accountable and liable for the words he spoke. By using parrhesia, the speaker accepts that the uttered words are indeed *his* words, that he reveals a personal truth. Usually, parrhesia takes place in a context where this risk is real to the extent that the speaker faces an interlocutor who is powerful enough to actually make the speaker liable. Parrhesiastic acts occur under conditions of inferiority, e.g. when, as described by Plutarch, Plato and Dion criticise the tyrant Dionysos.<sup>298</sup> However, although one cannot, then, use parrhesia towards oneself, parrhesia nevertheless necessitates that the speaker establishes a relation with himself; the speaker projects himself into the future: "I am the one who *will have said* this and that".<sup>299</sup> In some sense, parrhesia is what the speaker uses in order to establish (in a specific context) an identity over time. He makes himself predictable for others by declaring truth more important than his (well-)being. And precisely thereby the situation turns unpredictable for himself as the others now can exploit his commitment. Parrhesia is the creation of unpredictability through predictability; parrhesia is the truthful self-constitution of identity by providing others with an occasion to exemplify their power; it is a focal point where truth, power, and self-relations come together, and where the three axes truth, power, ethics intersect and mutually constitute each other.<sup>300</sup>

## 79.

Of special importance for Foucault was, of course, the Socratic form of parrhesia for it was Socrates who linked parrhesia with *epimeleia heautou*, the care of the self. The Socratic parrhesiastic game took place as a kind of interrogation in a personal, face to face relationship. The listener was led by Socrates' questions into "giving an account of himself, of the manner in which he now spends his day, and of the kind of life he has lived hitherto".<sup>301</sup> Here, "to give an account of oneself" did not mean to provide an autobiography or to confess one's faults; at stake was the question of whether the listener was able to show that there was a relation between the rational discourse, the *logos*, he was using, and the way that he lived, the *bios*. Socrates was interested in discovering whether there was a harmonic relation between *logos* and *bios*; what was at stake in the socratic parrhesiastic



game was the present relation between the listener's life and truth. The point was not, then, just to esteem truth in specific situations which required courage, but to *live in truth*. And he, Socrates, was accepted and respected as a parrhesiastic figure precisely because he exemplified what he said. Socratic parrhesia had a long tradition through the Cynics and other Socratic schools. In fact, in the Greco-Roman period, the role of the parrhesiastes, the one who could use parrhesia, moved from the well-born citizen and, later, the political leader (or his advisor) to the philosopher. By the time of the Epicureans, parrhesia's affinity with the care of the self had developed to the point where parrhesia itself was primarily regarded as a technique of spiritual guidance for the "education of the soul".<sup>302</sup> The target of the new form of parrhesia was to convince someone that he must take care of himself and (then) of others -- which usually meant that he must change his style of life (not just: his opinion). At the centre of this *philosophical* parrhesia was the assumption that an harmonic relation between oneself and truth would grant access to further truth and knowledge. In this circle, Foucault identifies one of "the problematic enigmas of Western Thought -- e.g. as in Descartes or Kant",<sup>303</sup> or, one might add, in Foucault himself. That Foucault established a special relationship between himself and his work and between Socrates and his parrhesiastic practice is evident not only from the fact that, in 83 and 84, he began again to look at himself as a philosopher, but also from the way in which Foucault thematized Socrates' last words in his lectures in 84. These lectures were held at a time when Foucault knew that he was going to die soon.<sup>304</sup>

## 80.

Foucault was able to integrate the possibility of the autofinalisation of the practices related to the care of the self into his work in such a way that it seemed to confirm the very possibility -- the independence! -- of his work. But this possibility had become problematic only as a special case of a much more general problem -- the problem of change, i.e. the problem of the internal access to novelty.<sup>305</sup> It was through the gigantic lens of this problem that Foucault discovered his problem, which he solved first. But, having

come thus far, the temptation must have been great to return to the original lens via a generalization of what had become the solution to *his* problem. The new problem was, then, to trace circularity not just in self-relations but to establish it as a *general* phenomenon. For Foucault, this problem must have been as delicate as Zarathustra's silence for Nietzsche. In his most outspoken attempt, in the intended preface to the second volume of the History of Sexuality, Foucault presents the abstract notion of thought as a kind of universal host of self-reference: "transformation could not take place except by means of a working of thought upon itself."<sup>306</sup> However, it is not accidental that this version remained an *intended* and never became an actual preface. He had difficulties in conceptualizing the distinction between autonomy and self-reference and might have feared to evoke reservations along the lines of what Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow had called, in a different context, "the illusion of the autonomous discourse."<sup>307</sup> Still, in some sense, thought remains also later the place where the possibility of recursiveness lives -- a move which finally allows Foucault to propose the history of thought as a distinct field of inquiry. But now this possibility of recursiveness becomes embedded in a more complex composition of relations between being, experience, thought, and truth -- a composition which Foucault subsumes under the title "problematization". This concept marks Foucault's cautious attempt to generalize the consolation he had found in the circle of truth. His last methodological writings are exclusively devoted to "problematization". In that his project reappears in its own meaning world under this title, the concept of problematization plays a similar role for Foucault's project as the figure of Zarathustra for Nietzsche's.

## 81.

"The fundamental codes of a culture -- those governing its language, its schemes of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of its practices -- establish for every man, from the very first, the empirical orders with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home. At the other extremity of thought, there are the scientific theories or the philosophical interpretations which explain why order exists in general, what universal law it obeys, what principle



can account for it, and why this particular order has been established and not some other."<sup>308</sup> "The ordering codes and reflections upon order itself": these two extremes, which Foucault had established in Les Mots et les Choses, can finally merge and thereby bend the line segment they had delimited into a circle. This process, in which "being offers itself to be, necessarily, thought",<sup>309</sup> is what Foucault calls "problematization" -- a term which he had used before, but started to isolate only in 1983.<sup>310</sup> A problematization is "the totality of discursive and non-discursive practices that introduces something into the play of true and false and constitutes it as an object for thought."<sup>311</sup> In that a domain of action or a behaviour can enter the field of thought only after it became uncertain, after it lost its familiarity, after a certain number of difficulties occurred around it, the problematization is a kind of response to those difficulties; it is an answer, which consists in the development of a given into a question. Problematization responds to difficulties by developing the conditions in which possible responses can be given; it defines the elements that will constitute what different solutions attempt to respond to.<sup>312</sup> In other words, a question is always based on a previous answer; and the level of that previous answer is precisely the level of problematization. The concept proposes, then, a fundamental paradox, i.e. an incompleteness and openness which is inherent in the relation between being and thought. Apart from describing them as "social, economic or political processes", Foucault does not specify what factors precisely have the power to make taken-for-granted things problematic. He emphasizes, however, that these factors do not completely prescribe or determine the specific problematization they instigate. These factors are not *causes* in a strict sense; there is, again, a distinct element of thought in the problematization, which may influence whether or not, when, and how thought intervenes. A problematization is more than a mere representation of a pre-existing object; it is something else than the creation by discourse of an object that doesn't exist; it is not the immediate, direct, or necessary expression of the difficulties. Rather, it is an original or specific response, a work of thought, a kind of creation, which has real effects on the conditions under which it was instigated. The source of novelty lies, after all, precisely in this step in which being, through thought, establishes distance to itself, portrays itself in order to look at itself. The relationship between reality and thought surfaces in



problematizations; and problematizations are what makes a history of thought both distinct and possible. Through problematizations, the power of thought becomes historically analyzable -- and this was, after all, what Foucault had exploited in all his studies since Folie et Dérison.<sup>313</sup>

## 82.

Thought can bend reality and link it to itself; the distinctness of thought is the source of its power. Distance is, then, implicit in thought: thought "is what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting"; it is "freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem." Aptly summarizing his own efforts, Foucault concludes that the study of thought is the analysis of freedom.<sup>314</sup> In this way, i.e. by conceptualizing the relation between thought and being via the concept of problematization, he skilfully managed to put the circularity of self-relations in a political context. *It is through ethics, through techniques of the self, through an aesthetics of existence that one can train and design the distinctness of thought.* The ethics of care for the self becomes eventually a practice of freedom -- especially if it could be possible to uncouple ethics from scientific knowledge. For Foucault, the question of whether there could be an ethics of acts and their pleasures, without references either to law, to marriage, to science, etc., which would still be able to take into account the pleasure of the other, was essentially a political question.<sup>315</sup> This did not mean that a renewed culture of the self would solve current political problems. In particular, Foucault never proposes the ancient Greek ethics as an alternative. On the contrary, he was "quite disgusted" by the Greek ethics of pleasure, which was "linked to a virile society, to dissymmetry, exclusion of the other, an obsession with penetration, and a kind of threat of being dispossessed of your own energy, and so on".<sup>316</sup> Nor did he want to suggest "that the only point of resistance to political power (as a state of domination) lies in the relationship of self to self".<sup>317</sup> But he did claim that the elaboration of a new ethics would have political relevance. "Recent liberation movements suffer from the fact that they cannot find [...] any other ethics than an ethics founded



on so-called scientific knowledge of what the self is, what desire is, what the unconscious is, and so on."<sup>318</sup> And since "the lifting of the codes and the dislocation of prohibitions have probably been carried out more easily than people thought they would (which certainly seems to indicate that their purpose was not what it was believed to be) [...], the problem of an ethics as a form to be given to one's behaviour and life has arisen once more."<sup>319</sup>

### 83.

In his late interviews, Foucault seems to look for opportunities to talk about problematization. The introduction of this concept reflects the successful re-entry of his project into itself, because it always has a double reference: it refers to the phenomena Foucault studied as well as to the very activity of studying them. Foucault problematizes problematizations;<sup>320</sup> he exemplifies what he sees and thereby, i.e. by doing this, provides evidence that problematization as a work of thought is feasible. In this way, Foucault's project is able to validate itself by its continuation; it is able to anchor itself within itself. It has overcome itself not by escaping from itself or by getting rid of itself, but on the contrary by integrating itself into itself, by accepting itself, by taking itself for granted. The double reference implicit in the notion of problematization reveals that the circular link between observation and self-observation has been re-established, but now with a significant difference: in that the circle of truth seemed to warrant the possibility of self-transformation (as a practice), the problem now was to generalize this possibility towards society, towards politics. In other words, the circle which had been at the centre of his project from the outset reversed its orientation at the moment of re-entry. The circle collapsed to a point and unfolded out of this point with the opposite orientation: finally, Foucault adopted the epistemological design of the Nietzsche of the early 1880s. When Foucault declared in his last interview that he was "just a Nietzschean", he was right as he perhaps had never been before.<sup>321</sup> And just as Nietzsche, he could now return to everything he wrote before the re-entry, to his earlier "form of philosophy", and "use it as a field of experience to be studied." The re-entry made it possible for him "to go back through what [he] was already thinking, to

think it differently, and to see what [he] had done from a new vantage point and in a clearer light". "Sure of having travelled far", he found "that one is looking down on oneself from above." For Foucault, this experience confirmed that he was following "a more radical way of thinking the philosophical experience."<sup>322</sup>

#### 84.

But Foucault does not stop there. For once he established a link between observation and self-observation, i.e. once he was able to look at himself in terms of what he studied, he came to reflect on this very activity of establishing such a link *as an aspect of his present*. In fact, precisely because this link had been established by then, any observation of the present, of his actuality, presupposed and caused a reflexion on where Foucault could locate his own activity in what he observed as his present. His starting point for this exercise is a discussion of Kant's text "Was ist Aufklärung?" [What is Enlightenment?], which Kant wrote as a response to the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, which had asked the question in 1784.<sup>323</sup> According to Foucault, the importance of this "minor text" does not so much lie in its contents but in the design of Kant's argument. The text is a reflection by Kant on the contemporary status of his own enterprise: by describing Enlightenment as "the moment when humanity is going to put its own reason to use, without subjecting itself to any authority" Kant proclaims the necessity of critique, since "its role is that of defining the conditions under which the use of reason is legitimate in order to determine what can be known, what must be done, and what may be hoped."<sup>324</sup> In his interpretation of the present, Kant finds a place for himself. For Foucault, Kant's text "Was ist Aufklärung?" marks the origin of that gesture; it marks the first appearance of the question "of the present as a philosophical event incorporating within it the philosopher who speaks of it."<sup>325</sup> The philosopher's inclusion in this present was no longer a question of his adherence to a doctrine or a tradition which he would accept once and for all, but it became the cause and the result of his reflection on the present. In the philosopher's reflection, his doing and the present became linked in a circular way. Thus, according to Foucault, Kant's text indicates the beginning of an ethos, of a specific



mode of reflective relation to the present; it indicates the beginning of the "attitude of modernity".<sup>326</sup>

85.

Modernity was not to be envisaged, then, as a fixed regime of thought which was in some sense different to "premodern" or "postmodern" regimes; modernity should be envisioned as an attitude, even as a permanent task. However, Foucault does not simply read this attitude into Kant's text and then links his (Foucault's!) present and his doing to the tradition that unfolded out of this attitude; that would have been, according to Foucault's own interpretation, precisely a step back to pre-Kantian thinking. Instead, Foucault radicalises the Kantian move by applying it to Kant himself. The Kantian critical question of knowing "what limits knowledge has to renounce transgressing" had to be transformed "into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression".<sup>327</sup> Critique, then, was necessary not only to discipline reason, but also to discipline (the Kantian form of) critique -- for critique is reason, too. Foucault's version of the attitude of modernity comes very close, then, to a presentation of the dynamics of his own undertaking. For, in his version, it referred to a kind of inquiry which was oriented towards the "contemporary limits of the necessary", towards "what is not or no longer indispensable for the constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects";<sup>328</sup> it referred to a "limit-attitude" which understood critique not as an imposition of limits but precisely as "an historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and as an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them";<sup>329</sup> it meant work done at the limits of ourselves; it would amount to an "historical ontology of ourselves", i.e. to an "historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying"; as such it could "separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, think";<sup>330</sup> it would conserve "the question of the historicity of the thought of the universal";<sup>331</sup> etc. In this ingenious move, Foucault exemplifies the attitude of modernity, creates space for himself in his present, maintains

the circular link between observation and self-observation *precisely by equating these three activities.*



## *Four* Niklas Luhmann

### Part 1

#### 86.

Whenever he is at home in Oerlinghausen, Niklas Luhmann spends each and basically the whole day writing: in the morning from 8.30 to noon, in the afternoon from about 14.00 to 16.00, and then finally in the evening until about 23.00. The workday is interrupted only by meals, walks with his dog and highly concentrated periods of relaxation which usually do not last more than 15 minutes. Writing, it seems, is more a routine than a struggle; in his work, Niklas Luhmann never enforces anything and only does what comes easily to him. Once he feels he has come to a standstill in his work, he immediately turns to something else. In that he always works on several books, articles or projects at the same time, he is never blocked in his work. Writing, again, does not represent a burden or strain to him which has to be justified or rewarded by periods of non-work; on the contrary, he feels that his thoughts follow hot on the heels of one another, and that there are too many problems he has not as yet properly understood, so that on trips abroad it takes only a few days until he thinks he now has to go home and continue writing.<sup>332</sup> The result of this disciplined and from the outset well organized work is a bibliography which by now should list some 320 entries, including some 40 books;<sup>333</sup> the result is, in other words, a more or less uninterrupted stream of writing which provides everything but the evidence of a crisis as severe as encountered by, say, Nietzsche or Foucault.

#### 87.

In the last chapter, I started the discussion of Foucault's trajectory with a section which paralleled the introductory section on Nietzsche

only in order to continue, then, with a reference to the decisive difference which explains the parallels between the trajectories of the two thinkers. The opening section on Luhmann, however, starts with a difference -- the absence of crisis! -- to the previous openings and, if the architecture of this part were just a reversion of the architecture of the part on Foucault, I should now continue by marking the decisive similarity which explains the differences between the projects of Foucault and Luhmann. In some sense, this is precisely what I intend to do -- only that it cannot be done immediately.<sup>334</sup> Nietzsche's writings were very much present in Foucault's work from early on so that a discussion of only the latter can hardly avoid to mention and include the former as well. For Luhmann, no such intense relation to any other thinker can be established. Although he certainly learned tremendously from Talcott Parsons' theory of action systems, from its problems, its reception, its failure, and although he admired the scope and courage of Parsons' design, Luhmann has never been a Parsonian. Already before Luhmann went to Harvard and actually met Parsons in 1960/61, his work was based on an understanding of the concept of the "function" which differed significantly from the one offered by Parsons' structural-functional method.<sup>335</sup> Parsons remained, though, an important reference point throughout Luhmann's writings, partly as someone who was simply too popular to be ignored, partly as someone to establish differences to.<sup>336</sup> Especially during its formative years Luhmann's work showed all the advantages and disadvantages of the work of an outsider who would first follow his own thoughts and then, only *after* he made his points, would look for similarities and differences to other thinkers. Therefore, because of its independence, I will first have to present Luhmann's undertaking on its own and postpone an elaboration of the relationship between Foucault's and Luhmann's design until the concluding part of this essay.

## 88.

There was, at first, a conspicuous distance between Luhmann's interest in sociology and philosophy and between his actual studies and his work. Between 1946 and 49, he studied Law at the University of Freiburg and then spent time as a junior barrister at a small local law



firm, until he got bored and, in 1954, changed to the Oberverwaltungsgericht Lüneburg, where he worked as a civil servant, largely occupied with administrative issues. Only one year later, Luhmann profited from a change of government in Niedersachsen and became referee at the local parliament in Hannover, where he was in charge of a juridical review of cases of reparation for victims of the Nazi-regime. And yet, although the position he occupied at the age of only 28 promised to be a starting point for a steep career as civil servant, Luhmann apparently never considered what looked most obvious to others. When confronted with the requirements he would have to fulfil if he were to take the route that seemed so obvious, he responded "I am reading Hölderlin."<sup>337</sup> Due to this lack of enthusiasm for his work, it seemed a question of time until he would get bored again with the monotony of administration, especially since the continuation of his career would have required, sooner or later, an affiliation with a political party. It was by chance, then, that he found an announcement of a competition for a Harvard-fellowship on his desk.

## 89.

Throughout these years he spent in small law firms, at the court in Lüneburg, or finally at Hannover, Luhmann systematically pursued his interest in philosophy and sociology. In 1952, at the age of 25, he had understood, as he explained later, that he had to plan for a lifetime rather than for a book, and began to systematize his note-taking. Instead of leaving the notes in the books he read and instead of collecting them in folders which remained difficult to survey, Luhmann started to build up his own archive of notes according to a principle which he now keeps for more than 40 years. The organizational principle is of surprising simplicity. Notes are not categorized according to topics or subjects but are marked only by a code, a string of numbers and characters, which indicates the place where to find them in the system. Within the text of the note, references to other notes are included so that, say, a note with the code 57/12 can either be continued as 57/13 or, starting from a specific word or idea, can be specified under 57/12a, and so on. In this way, the system remains highly flexible, allows ramifications of infinite depths and organizes itself

via its internal references in a non-linear fashion; in fact, after some time the very organization of the system becomes an additional source of information. The main system primarily memorizes Luhmann's own thoughts, seldom quotations; a separate system takes care of bibliographical references and both systems are linked.<sup>338</sup> 30 years after he began to organize his ideas in this way, Luhmann explains his productivity and creativity by referring to his archive: to write a manuscript is basically to communicate with this system, which not only provides the notes taken over three decades but also suggests surprising cross-connections between them. The maintenance of the archive, however, now takes up more time than writing books.<sup>339</sup> Luhmann's working style reflects and promotes features of his work which are present throughout his writings: a refusal, very much inspired by his wish to preserve possibilities of change and learning, to accept any kind of a priori categorization according to subject matters, as well as a very independent line of questioning and observing, which follows its own internally developed standards rather than newspaper events.

## 90.

Even before he went to Harvard, Luhmann had a clear sense of what his interests and immediate projects were. The stay at Harvard was supposed to help him writing a book on the theory of organization that would later evolve into Funktionen und Folgen formaler Organisation [Functions and Consequences of Formal Organization], his first proper book.<sup>340</sup> His readings in the mid and late 50s focused on Descartes and Husserl; he also mentions an interest in Kant, whereas he did not find much inspiration in Hegel or Marx. In sociological theory, Luhmann studied the early functionalism of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, and was thereby led to cultural anthropology and ethnology. However, he always disliked the German philosophical anthropology.<sup>341</sup> Well-equipped with knowledge and interests as he was, Harvard did *not* become the sensational key event that would change his life. To be sure, Luhmann's efforts to work himself into the architecture of Parsons' theory, the acquaintance with Parsons, their disagreement on the meaning of the functional method as well as Parsons' inability to grasp the point of disagreement -- all



this helped him to clarify, to specify, and to discern his own concerns. And yet, although Parsons' theory became the stadia rod which was to be overcome, the momentum by which this should be achieved had earlier roots.

91.

His application for the Harvard-fellowship already expressed an interest in leaving civil service and in intensifying his sociological studies. After his return from the States, Luhmann was looking for an occasion to switch from administration to "science".<sup>342</sup> At the research institute of the University for Administration at Speyer, Luhmann finds more time for his theoretical interests and finishes his book Funktionen und Folgen formaler Organisation (1964). It must have been around that time that Luhmann's work caught the attention of one of the most influential German sociologists, Helmut Schelsky, who would soon, in 65, promote him to the position of a head of department at the Sozialforschungsstelle Dortmund. During the second half of the 60s, Schelsky was very much involved in the foundation of the university at Bielefeld, which was supposed to become, at least in Schelsky's plans, a reform university with a strong emphasis on research and interdisciplinary work. So far, Luhmann had been sceptical about an academic career; he had always envisioned the university as something small, narrow and repetitive.<sup>343</sup> However, Schelsky managed to convince Luhmann that Bielefeld would be a different experience.<sup>344</sup> In 1966, Luhmann's Funktionen und Folgen formaler Organisation and his Recht und Automation in der öffentlichen Verwaltung [Law and Automation in Public Administration] (1966) were accepted as dissertation and habilitation at the university of Münster by Helmut Schelsky and Dieter Claessens. Somehow Schelsky's influence overcame all bureaucratic obstacles in Luhmann's appointment at Bielefeld; still, for formal reasons, Luhmann had to study sociology for a brief time. He had opted for a chair in sociology because he thought that, as a sociologist, one can basically do everything without being limited by some particular subject matter. Luhmann gave his inaugural lecture under the title "Sociological Enlightenment" on the 25th of January, 1967, in Münster, before he took up his chair in sociology at

Bielefeld in 1968 after the opening of the new university. Although, Schelsky's hopes with regard to Bielefeld were disappointed -- Bielefeld turned out to be a "pretty normal university" (Luhmann) --, Luhmann apparently never thought about leaving the place. By now, Luhmann has taught and worked for 25 years in Bielefeld.

92.

From 1968 on, Luhmann was on his own, then, free to follow his own ideas, free to devote most of his time to his theoretical interests. By then, two concerns had moved to the centre of his writings: first, there was the issue which distanced him from Parsons from the outset, i.e. the re-definition of the concept of the function implying a critique of the predominant functionalism of the time, and second, there was the program of sociological enlightenment, which he summarized in his inaugural lecture. Both concerns are linked in that the latter entails methodological prescriptions made necessary by the former; and both flow into the necessity of a truly universal approach.

93.

Luhmann's response to the circularity of functional explanations was an attempt to understand the functional method not as a causal explanation but rather as a method for searching for alternatives, as a technique of comparing.<sup>345</sup> Functionalism as it was practised by Parsons ultimately led into the well-known dead-end where everything that happens within a given structure or system was causally reduced to the necessity of preserving the original structure. The question of what the function of structures or systems in general might be remained inaccessible in this design.<sup>346</sup> For Luhmann, however, a reference to a function never prescribes in what specific way it is to be fulfilled. Inspired by the mathematical definition of a "function", Luhmann presents in his very first publication (1958) the reference to a function as an opening of a (limited) space for a variety of possible causes that may all bring about the desired effect. Functional analysis, thus, cannot be a search for causal laws understood as a relation between one



cause and one effect; functional analysis must be seen as a search for functionally equivalent causes with regard to one problematic effect.<sup>347</sup> It is, then, a search for possibilities of replacement (not: of deconstruction!).<sup>348</sup> Therefore, a function should be understood as a problem to which several (or none) solutions may exist.<sup>349</sup> The formula of the problem finally replaces the formulae of maintenance and preservation.<sup>350</sup> This slight shift of perspective, taken seriously, entails a departure from ontological metaphysics which accepted as "being" only everything that was not non-being and thereby excluded from the sphere of true being all phenomena of becoming, vanishing, movement and the mere possible. The ontological view of the world abstracted the concrete world towards constant features and not towards principles of variation. In contrast, Luhmann's functional method cannot define identity, being over time that is, as an exclusion of other possibilities, but on the contrary only as a form of organization or order of other possibilities. Hence, identity is not a self-sufficient substance, but a coordinating synthesis, a *system* which always contains references to other possibilities and which therefore always remains fragile, problematic.<sup>351</sup> The essence of things cannot be defined by or reduced to some given kernel of substance but can only be defined by their positions in a texture of other possibilities, i.e. by the conditions of their replacement.<sup>352</sup>

#### 94.

2000 years of searching for the substance have led then, according to Luhmann, to a universal problematization of identity, unity, stability or being in general. From now on, each identity has to be understood as a system, i.e. as a structured openness for other possibilities.<sup>353</sup> The concept of the system stems from this cluster of notions such as being, identity, problem, and thus refers neither to pre-conditional or unconditional, substantial entities, nor to first or ultimate causes, but to a problematic invariance which requires stabilization, i.e. activity in an unstable environment, and which can be maintained in various possible ways.<sup>354</sup> By implication, a universal systems theory turns everything that is self-evident into problems and all substances into functions. The point of this move is not to doubt everything or to

reveal that everything is an illusion; the point of this move is not to repeat scepticism. As a methodological prescription, it simply demands to find for everything that *is* a reference point from which it can be questioned with regard to its *replaceability*. For Luhmann, this change of perspective entails an advancement in rationality which is not based any more on the certainty that being [*das Seiende*], in some of its qualities, remains what it is. On the contrary, the advancement consists in a new certainty that, under specific circumstances, being need not remain itself. It gives access to a specific kind of freedom, a *libertas indifferentiae*, attainable through cognizance [*Erkenntnis*].<sup>355</sup>

## 95.

At first, Luhmann proposes this perspective as an universal research method capable of uniting the social sciences and wonders whether a uniting theory would be possible as well.<sup>356</sup> By replacing the concept of the function with the concept of the system as the most important concept in his thinking, Luhmann gives implicitly an affirmative answer to the last question: "systems theory" is now the preferred label for his work.<sup>357</sup> But this change in the early and mid 60s is a synthesis rather than a shift from method to theory. As an implicit theoretical claim, Luhmann's method presupposes an inversion of the classical ontological picture whereby the world was the cosmic sphere of necessities where the facticity of the mere possible became a problem. Instead the world is contingency itself, in which it becomes a problem to justify necessities and truths. In other words, the world does not provide validities but only the problem of validity.<sup>358</sup> As a theory, Luhmann's perspective had to have strong implications, in turn, at the level of methodology as well. The notions of theory and method merged.

## 96.

In that ontological metaphysics isolated the system by defining its being via its internal relations and its independence, it neglected the system's environment. Since stability was an inherent quality of being,



problems had to seem unstable and transient in principle. Functional systems theory, in contrast, understands precisely the stabilization of a system as the *permanent* problem of maintaining the relative invariance of the system's boundaries in an unsteady environment, which changes regardlessly of the system.<sup>359</sup> From the outset, then, Luhmann's theory is about the system *and* its environment; it has always been a system/environment-theory.<sup>360</sup> The identity of the system is not a self-sufficient *unity*, but is the *difference* between system and environment. The universal problematization of identity corresponds to this decision to start theorizing with difference rather than unity.

97.

There is no adequate logic for the concept of the problem. If a problem uniquely prescribed its solution, it would cease to be a problem as it would immediately evoke its one and only (dis)solution. The concept of the problem implies that there are several possible solutions so that the actually selected solution cannot be deductively inferred from the problem. As a first conclusion, logical deduction is to be replaced by a thoughtful and careful reception of empirically found structural responses to problems.<sup>361</sup> Moreover, if the finally implemented solution is nothing but a selection from a variety of possibilities, the solution cannot be the endpoint in the history of the problem for its acceptance is based on the banishment of other settlements. Instead, solutions always multiply, proliferate, disperse, circulate, diversify, diffuse the original problem. A theory utilising the notion of the problem must be able, then, to provide tools for the analysis of both problems and solutions. And any conceptualization of the relationship between the two must not repeat the mistake of dialectics, i.e. it must not ascribe too hastily the quality of a motive, a tension, an incentive or impulse to problems in general. By implanting stimuli for the search for solutions already into the problem or contradiction, dialectical theories have no choice but to elevate the problematic of the problem to the level of facts without reflection and to consider problems as inherently unstable. This view, implicit in Hegel and Marx, equates broken logic with the inevitability of change,

development, progress. It reflects a specific pre-conception of man as filling the gap between the recognition of a problem and between the vision and creation of a new situation. Man presupposed himself as the locus where the dimension of facts was transposed to the dimension of time, where the imperfection of facts was transformed into progress, and where the increasing interdependence of behaviours was translated into an increasing velocity of change.<sup>362</sup> The problem is, then, to depart from dialectics and to build a theory with the concept of the problem in its centre without evoking transcendental conceptions of man who, as a problem-solver justifying solutions but not the problems, bridges the gap between problem and solution.

98.

"Soziologische Aufklärung" [Sociological Enlightenment] was the title of Niklas Luhmann's programmatic inaugural lecture in 1967.<sup>363</sup> It also became the title of a series of books in which he collected articles he had published before in various journals, added by papers originally written in order to round off these books. For Luhmann, the putting together of these books provides an occasion to overview his writings of preceding years, to locate gaps, omissions, and deficiencies. Five of those books have been published so far in 1970, 1975, 1981, 1987, and 1990 respectively. Thus, the title "sociological enlightenment" accompanies Luhmann's entire writings from the 60s to the 90s. What is, then, sociological enlightenment? According to Niklas Luhmann, the program of enlightenment had been based on two central propositions: first, on the idea of an equal participation of all people at some common reason that existed without institutional mediation and, second, on a great optimism with regard to the ability to bring about right, true, and reason-able situations. Sociology does not emerge, later, as an application of enlightenment but rather as an attempt to delineate the limits of enlightenment. For this purpose, the sociology of the 19th century invents the technique of "incongruent perspectives":<sup>364</sup> the meaning of acting is not explained by immersing into its essence but by applying standards which, form the point of view of acting, appear strange, alien, inadequate. Marx deduces thought from economic conditions of life which do not have to be part of thought; Freud uses



parallel arguments only that he refers to libidinous impulses; and Nietzsche approaches christianity in strictly irreligious terms.<sup>365</sup> Not closeness but distance to the object of study leads to knowledge. The result of this business of disappointment was the revelation that the social determination of the actor went much beyond what the actor might have wanted to admit. Suddenly, the world of the actor appeared as a kind of illusion, full of tricks fulfilling functions that remained unconscious. The confrontation of the actor and his free will with this life-preserving chimera amounted to a discreditation of the actor, culminating in the delicate consequence that he now had to be emancipated -- as if he had been a slave before!

99.

Functional systems theory changes this perspective from "discreditation" and "unmasking" to "overtaxation" and "overcharging": the world of the actor is not an illusion driven by unconscious ulterior purposes, but an incomplete selection whose incompleteness is made necessary by the fact that comprehension of world complexity must be coordinated with the possibilities of its reduction. World complexity, in other words, becomes comprehensible and even accessible only via selectivity, i.e. via the reduction of complexity. These formulations were made possible by a conceptual shift in Luhmann's writings in the second half of the 60s. Complexity replaces as the most important concept the concept of the system, which earlier had already succeeded the concept of the function as key term. Luhmann proposes complexity as the ultimate reference point for functional analysis. It is now the function of a social system to make world complexity accessible by reducing it, i.e. by shifting the problem of complexity from the outside to the inside of some system which, after this process of concretization, represents selected aspects of complexity to which it can respond.<sup>366</sup> The concept of complexity is introduced in Luhmann's writings at first as a kind of panacea lacking a proper and precise definition. At some point, it occurs as the totality of all possible events (world complexity), and then as a relation between (any) system and the world which is always asymmetric: for all real systems, including biological and physical systems, the world is excessively complex in

that it always contains more possibilities than the system can respond and adapt to.<sup>367</sup> A system is called complex if its structure is compatible with a variety of possibilities.<sup>368</sup> The slope of complexity between the world and a system is later specified as the difference between the indeterminate, undeterminable, unmanipulatable complexity of the world and the concrete, determinate, manipulatable complexity a system represents to itself.<sup>369</sup> Departing from the systems theory of the natural sciences, which uses the number of elements or the degree of internal differentiation of a system as a measurement of complexity, Luhmann understands complexity as the problem to which the building up of systems is a "solution".<sup>370</sup> However, in this provisional design, world complexity as such remains inaccessible for functional analysis; it turns transcendental. Luhmann acknowledges the problem in his exchange with Habermas in the late 60s, early 70s, expressing a dissatisfaction with the term complexity and the way he had handled it before.<sup>371</sup> To some extent, Luhmann recalls the term in the following, partly because of its deficiencies, partly because some of its functions were taken over by the newly refined concept of meaning. In a new version of the concept, suggested in 1978 at the latest, complexity refers to situations of "enforced selectivity", in which systems cannot connect all their elements with all the other elements.<sup>372</sup> This is also the version which remains valid until today.

## 100.

The world, then, is a problem not with regard to its being but with regard to its complexity.<sup>373</sup> Under the headline of the reduction of complexity, everything (with the world as the only exception) becomes comparable to everything else. In particular, any kind of a priori defined limitation of what is possible, any kind of objective order of subjective experiences represents just one way of reducing complexity and as such can be problematized in comparison with other ways of reducing complexity. This perspective allows a vista of the limits of enlightenment; it invites, in other words, an enlightenment on enlightenment. Sociological enlightenment is, then, an enlightenment which turned reflexive.<sup>374</sup> Taken seriously, it leads to a de-



dogmatization of sociology since any limitation imposed on meaningful problematizing is now a positively defined constancy. Thus, sociology requires a permanent on-going decision-making with regard to what structures are not being problematized for what purposes. Sociology is forced to accept responsibility for itself.<sup>375</sup>

101.

Another important consequence of sociological enlightenment is the reintroduction of history as a field of interest. With its optimism towards equality, the enlightenment had required the levelling and smoothing of differences which were "only" historical and not rooted in nature or reason. Equality and freedom converge only in a hostility towards history. The repelling of history corresponded to the postulation of a metaphysics of an intersubjectively valid reason. In contrast, sociological enlightenment includes history not because it values tradition, but because history itself is a means for the reduction of complexity: by disappearing into the past, events lose their "replaceability", i.e. their ability that they could also have been different. A typical question of sociological enlightenment is, accordingly, how the entering into the past solidifies aspects of the world. Hence, it is not history as such, as a reservoir of "objective" facts, which interests the sociologist, but history as it is present in the present and as it is a precondition of the future.<sup>376</sup>

102.

Over the following 25 years, more characterizations of sociological enlightenment are given. In 1979 sociology is presented as the "science of the second view" -- a terminology which anticipates the semantics of the second order observation of the late 80s/early 90s to which I will return later.<sup>377</sup> In 81, sociology is the science of *societal* self-reflexion, even if this reflexion takes place only in a subsystem of society: in science.<sup>378</sup> Three years later, the task of sociology is given as an enlightenment of society on its own complexity.<sup>379</sup> In the preface of the fourth volume of Soziologische Aufklärung, published in

1987, Luhmann explains again that sociological enlightenment is not an unmasking critique or the ultimate disclosure of what society really is, but an observation which observes itself, a description which describes itself.<sup>380</sup> The following volume indicates in the preface, written in March 1990, that what is and has always been at stake in sociological enlightenment is "a critique of knowledge";<sup>381</sup> the latest formulation (1991) summarizes the program of sociological enlightenment as an attempt to create a semantic space in which modern society can reflect upon itself.<sup>382</sup>

### 103.

The universal problematization of identity and the universal refusal to accept any kind of a priori are mutually implicative. The universality behind this refusal imposes strong methodological instructions on the type of work that tries to live up to those standards. For example, the very field of inquiry the work tries to cover cannot be taken for granted. In fact, it cannot be defined as a kind of substance which is somehow specific in that it is different from everything else for any such definition would require to accept this difference and specificity as an a priori. Hence, whatever the work picks up as a problem, the problem itself remains problematic. In such a situation, one can either skilfully avoid specifications of what one's work is about or start theoretical work with universal claims. From the outset, Luhmann chose the second option and, accordingly, the specificity of his work does not lie in a limited range of topics but in the configuration and geometry of its concepts. The claim to universality turns out to be, then, a certain form of *not* making claims at all; it expresses a form of modesty.

### 104.

Theoretical work evolving according to those standards of universality can neither accept some unconditional beginning nor some kind of end. The work must, of course, begin somehow but then, after some time, must be able to return to where it started and re-



problematize its starting point. A type of work is required which carefully and sensibly tries to get in touch with the world and then, once it feels that it did get in touch with something, reflects upon getting in touch with the world as an aspect of that world. Clearly, the design of such a theory must be recursive, i.e. self-referential. The reflexivity of the program of sociological enlightenment re-appears here as the methodological implication of the rejection of a *prioris* and of the uneasiness about an hasty acceptance of identities in general. This requirement of reflexivity goes beyond the usual academic litany that one should always be modest and reflexive in one's work and that one should always look at it from a metaperspective. The problem here is to design a theory whose architecture is flexible enough to handle this re-entry of the theory into itself; the problem is to work in a theoretical frame which cannot even take itself for granted but which nevertheless should allow the generation of some results so that the theory in fact grows. In light of this task, it is not at all surprising that it took Luhmann more than twenty years until he overcame his doubt and hesitation and made a commitment to a theory design that he thought fulfilled the necessary requirements.

# 105.

The key to the problem is, of course, the relation between observation and self-observation as it is or is not manifested in the theory's architecture. In that universal claims or doubts cannot but include the entity that expresses those claims or doubts, they force a theory to realize at least some capacity for self-observation. Somehow the theory must make explicit how it theorizes about itself and where it locates itself in its universal claims. Claims to universality enforce, then, an oscillation between observation and self-observation, i.e. between self- and hetero-reference, and thereby transform a theory into a kind of research practice, into an attitude towards sociological research.<sup>383</sup> From the outset, this effect is intentional in Luhmann's work; in fact, it constitutes one of the features that give unity and continuity to his work. The early, purposeful conflation of the notions "method" and "theory" is as well part of this as is Luhmann's inclination to speak of the "practice of theory".<sup>384</sup> In an interview of 1985,

reporting how he came to be interested in science, Luhmann explained that he had been fascinated by the idea that a theory becomes more complex like a practice when it is given time and the possibility to improve its propositions according to its own standards.<sup>385</sup> In 87, he added that a methodology of this type presupposes an open future with the prospect of infinite continuation (with self-produced operations).<sup>386</sup>

# 106.

Another justification of claims to universality is Luhmann's continuous effort to make sociology responsible for what it produces by giving positivity to its position. If sociology can be represented by some autonomous architecture of concepts, sociology itself will become accessible for critique and will cease to provide an hiding-place for easy critique, opposition, and deconstruction, which all legitimate their inability to replace what they destroy as "Wertfreiheit" [value freedom].<sup>387</sup> To represent the unity of sociology as a discipline in a theory, however, requires universality: all aspects of social life have to be covered -- again: including the theory itself. Throughout his project Luhmann tries to define this unity as a common problematic [Problemstellung]. His first proposal, as already mentioned, is to look for a sufficiently abstract problem which unites sociology in that everything considered to be part of social life appears as functionally equivalent with regard to its being a response to that problem. For some time, until the early 70s, the problem of the reduction of (world) complexity serves as such a uniting problematic although Luhmann never was completely satisfied with this design.<sup>388</sup> The attempt to define sociology positively is complemented by parallel attempts to give positivity to the all-encompassing social entity, i.e. to society, which, for Luhmann, can only be world society.<sup>389</sup> According to Luhmann, this concern -- explicitly directed against the wisdom of post-modernity -- makes it necessary that, later, the concept of the social system must be defined in such a way that society, too, turns out to be such a system.<sup>390</sup>



The necessity of a recursive theory design, of reflexivity and therefore the necessity to locate self-reference somewhere in that design was evident in Luhmann's work from the outset -- even before he explicitly introduced sociological enlightenment as a reflexive enlightenment. However, the issue of self-reference not only appears as a methodological problem or solution; from the beginning, it is also thematized as an aspect of social life. An article of 1966, entitled "Reflexive Mechanismen" [Reflexive Mechanisms], presents the possibility that processes become reflexive -- e.g. that it is learned how to learn, decided how to make decisions -- as a product and condition of civilization. If those steps of reflexivity are connected in series, a process dramatically increases its selectivity, i.e. its ability to reduce complexity. Reflexivity is a response to complexity. Already in the mid 60s, then, the differentiation and functioning of systems is closely linked to reflexivity, i.e. to the ability of systems to apply their operations to their operations.<sup>391</sup> Slowly but surely, over the next 10 years, these early indications condense. In 1967, Luhmann observes that the old hierarchical-transitive models implicitly presupposed that what brings about change was "stronger", "higher" or "more persistent" than what changes, and added that this bias did not fit the empirical evidence of, say, the relationship between politics and administration. Here, an unstable part of a system -- politics -- is certainly able to direct a more stable part -- administration. He concludes with a call for circular models.<sup>392</sup> In the written version of his inaugural lecture, Luhmann refers to the circular interdependence of causal relations as the main reason why a disentanglement of those relations in form of asymmetrical causal laws ultimately fails. The permanence of the conditions which the system exploits by existing usually depends itself on the existence of the system.<sup>393</sup> Not much later, he proposes a cyclical relationship between action and action system: one presupposes the other, and is surprised by the proximity of cybernetics and his functional systems theory.<sup>394</sup> In the early 70s, Luhmann publishes an article on the self-thematization of society, subtitled as "On the category of reflexion from the perspective of systems theory", in which he discusses the relationships between concepts such as reflexivity, reflexion, self-thematization, self-abstraction, self-

hypostatization. A first hint is given that a systematic employment of those terms may amount to an exit from the philosophy of the subject by generalizing what were the subject's privileges.<sup>395</sup> And in 74, Luhmann emphasizes that, to a great extent, our cultural tradition was brought about by self-selective, autocatalytic processes, which were made possible and impelled by the use of communicative media.<sup>396</sup>

108.

By 1975, it was clear to Luhmann that self-reference must somehow be a central pillar of his project. In a crucial article published in that year, he reflects on how other pillars -- systems theory, the theory of evolution, the theory of communication -- had become self-referential: a theory of society is a reflexion of society upon itself and social systems may contain, entail, or be based on reflexivity; the newer theories of evolution explain later stages of evolution not by teleology but by references to earlier stages of evolution; and finally, a theory of communication is communication about communication. As a next step, then, Luhmann proposes to connect a variety of self-referential theories, but groans with regard to the implied terminological problems. The argumentation, he adds, will neither be linear nor cyclical, but labyrinthine; its goal is the production of contingent (not: final) truths. He ends on an optimistic note, proclaiming that there are theoretical contexts in which it is possible to learn without restricting abilities to learn.<sup>397</sup> Still, in the preface to the second volume of *Soziologische Aufklärung*, he presents his ideas as transient, as a "Nullserie" in his production of theory, and indicates that corrections are likely to follow.<sup>398</sup>



## Part 2

109.

Independently of Luhmann's efforts, the mid 70s witnessed a new development in general systems theory which would soon become popular and then even highly fashionable in the early 80s. The important innovation lay in a generalization of the concepts of self-organization, which had been popular since the 60s. Not just the structures, but even elements, that is last components, which are, at least for the system itself, undecomposable, were now considered to be produced by the system itself. Thus, in the second half of the 70s, the systems of general systems theory became truly self-referential. In order to distance the idea from the earlier notions of self-organization and in order to mark its novelty, the two Chilean biologists Humberto R. Maturana and Francesco J. Varela coined a new word for it: *autopoiesis*, which, translated from Greek, means something like self-production.<sup>399</sup> Autopoietic systems are systems which produce and reproduce the elements they consist of with the help of the elements they consist of. And everything these systems use as an unity -- their elements, processes, structures, the systems themselves -- is being produced and determined precisely by all those unities *within* the system. There is, then, no input of unity into the system and no output of unity out of the system.

110.

This is not the place to give a detailed introduction to the theory of autopoiesis. Instead, a brief discussion of two metaphors should illustrate the self-referential closure of autopoietic systems. As they are metaphors, their relevance in the theoretical context under examination should not be taken too literally. First, imagine someone dreaming how he prepares a dinner for his girlfriend and himself at a lovely summer evening. He sees himself cooking, laying the table, lighting the candles, and then, eventually, his alarm clock rings. But, instead of waking him up, the noise is incorporated into the dream's world as the

longed for doorbell: his loved one has arrived and the dinner can begin (and the dream can continue).<sup>400</sup> This dream should portray how causality is produced by the ongoing dream: it is the dream, who, according to its own internal dynamics, is able to pick up the noise coming from its environment and to transform it into an irritation; it is the dream, who assigns the status of a cause to the noise and produces order from that noise. For autopoietic systems, too, openness is a result of the systems' activities; it is an achievement (which may still have disastrous consequences for the system). The environment offers impulses and perturbations, but it is not able to determine their effects on the system. Thus, the concept of autopoiesis goes beyond and, in some sense, generalizes the distinction between open and closed systems. Autopoietic systems are self-referentially closed, they evolve according to their internal dynamics and thereby produce openness; they produce openness on the basis of closure. They reproduce themselves precisely by submitting themselves to this self-reproduced selectivity.

# 111.

A second metaphor which can be used to illustrate the same point has become famous in a somewhat different context: the butterfly effect. Exemplifying the possibility that, in a non-linear context, microscopic fluctuations may induce macroscopic changes, the butterfly effect refers to a situation where a butterfly, happily beating his wings over Florence, "causes" a local turbulence which is then amplified to a hurricane over the atlantic ocean. For the causal sciences, this possibility poses severe problems, which even led to the inauguration of a new science: *Chaos Theory*.<sup>401</sup> However, an interpretation of the butterfly effect in terms of autopoiesis looks rather different as it emphasizes self-reference instead of presupposing asymmetrical causal relations. For, after all, butterflies do not cause hurricanes independently of the weather conditions. It is the weather, then, which, at some point or other and always according to its own internal dynamics, opens itself and allows the butterfly to have the impact it has. It is the weather (temperature, atmospheric pressure etc.) which assigns the status of a cause to the butterfly. In turn, the butterfly



needs the unintended, coincidental cooperation of the weather in order to make an unintended difference. The situation looks much more symmetrical, and therefore much less surprising, from this perspective: both the weather as well as the butterfly are "causes" because the outcome, the hurricane, needed both. The assumption of a directed, asymmetrical causality, which runs from the butterfly to the weather, is not, then, an inherent quality of the situation, but only a traditional and problematic scheme employed by an observer.<sup>402</sup> In other words, causality is always added to a situation by processes of attribution.<sup>403</sup>

## 112.

By the time systems theory begins to thematize self-reference as a general organizational principle, Niklas Luhmann had already arrived at the conclusion that self-reference must somehow be explicitly incorporated into his work; for various reasons, it must be assigned a central position in a theory of social systems. But this theory, in the mid 70s, was still to be written. Clearly, Luhmann had from very early on kept the title "systems theory" for his venture, but so far his theoretical work consisted of a variety of articles dispersed in various journals, some of which were collected in the series Soziologische Aufklärung; however, the unity of the work was not accessible in one single theoretical volume. In fact, Luhmann had held the title "systems theory" only on credit. His work in its formative years is very much an attempt of a hypothetical self-interpretation; it is guided by the expectation that, sooner or later, his major concerns could be expressed in a sound theoretical context which would deserve the label "theory". In 66, Luhmann presented his work only as a "preparation" for a more fundamental theory of the reduction of complexity.<sup>404</sup> One year later, he claims for the first time that his work "outlines" [skizziert] a systems theory, only in order to confess, in 1968, that the "philosophical meaning" of the premises of his work remains "obscure" [dunkel].<sup>405</sup> In the preface to the first volume of Soziologische Aufklärung, written in December 1969, Luhmann explains that his theoretical papers are nothing but provisional drafts and, therefore, were published only as articles. When challenged by Habermas, he repeats that so far he just made proposals which even he, Luhmann, had not yet thought through

to their end.<sup>406</sup> And again, in the preface for the second edition (March 1972) of Soziologische Aufklärung 1, he justified the "beforehand publication of partial results out of larger working contexts" only by referring to the interest his book had provoked in the heyday of the debate with Habermas. As there was a demand to which he had to respond, he decided "not to hold back any publication until more extensive and systematically matured and developed pieces of work can be presented".<sup>407</sup>

### 113.

In the second half of the 70s, Luhmann apparently intensifies his efforts to put together the dispersed pieces of his work, to make concepts more compatible and to clarify them in this process. The major result of these efforts, visible at the latest in 78, fully developed in 84, is a careful and sensible introduction of the concept of autopoiesis into the network of concepts Luhmann had established by then. In particular, Luhmann follows the general trend of systems theory at the time and proclaims self-reference as the basic organizational principle of living, psychic and social systems, which are strictly distinguished according to whether they use life, consciousness, or communication as modes of autopoietic reproduction respectively. In addition to this threefold distinction, psychic and social systems differ from living systems in that they are able to internally represent the complexity of the world as meaning [Sinn].<sup>408</sup> Systems are defined, then, as autopoietic systems; by putting self-reference in the very centre of *any* system, Luhmann finally arrives at a general concept of the "system" which does not require references to the disputed and in all forms of structuralism worn-out concept of the "structure".<sup>409</sup>

### 114.

Before I will turn to the consequences of this move, I will first give a brief review of the context of the theoretical choices Luhmann had made earlier into which autopoiesis was inserted. The distinction between social and psychic (earlier: personal) systems and the



corresponding location of psychic systems in the environment of social systems is probably as old as Luhmann's project; at the latest in 64 this design was explicitly introduced and then kept throughout the years.<sup>410</sup> It collides with the notion of "intersubjectivity", which Luhmann at first uses somewhat uncritically in lack of alternatives.<sup>411</sup> The problematic of the term seems to have surfaced during the Habermas-Luhmann-debate: the "inter" and the "subject" do not go as easily together as any idea of "intersubjectivity" might suggest.<sup>412</sup> Luhmann finally abandons the concept in the late 70s indicating that the idea of "reflexion" and its related problems cannot even be properly formulated in terms of intersubjectivity.<sup>413</sup> The problem to which intersubjectivity was an inadequate answer is solved, then, by the autopoietic autonomy of social (communicative) systems.<sup>414</sup> This step, in turn, was prepared by a shift from action to communication as the basic mode of social autopoiesis. The relationship between action and communication had remained a source of confusion until about 1978, when action was presented as socially constituted and not as constitutive of the social.<sup>415</sup> The move towards communication is made explicit in 1981 and, with a footnote giving credit to Habermas for this shift, in 1982.<sup>416</sup> The term "action" now finds its place in the context of the self-descriptions and self-simplifications of social systems.<sup>417</sup>

## 115.

Another crucial pillar of the entire manoeuvre is the concept of meaning. As it was precisely the term which was at the centre of the exchange with Habermas, Luhmann did not have much choice but to concentrate his theoretical work on a clarification of the meaning of meaning, so that it was fully developed in its present form already in 1971.<sup>418</sup> As a common achievement of their co-evolution, psychic and social systems employ meaning as a mode of representing complexity. For meaning supplies the actual state of the system with redundant possibilities of further experience and action so that actuality always appears as surrounded by possibilities. The function of meaning is, in other words, to identify all operations of a system as selections and, at the same time, to preserve the system from shrinking down to the one

and only actual state: meaning mediates between "actuality that is certain but unstable, and potentiality that is uncertain but stable".<sup>419</sup> According to Luhmann, the references to other possibilities as an inherent aspect of actuality cannot be suppressed.<sup>420</sup> A rudimentary version of this concept of meaning was visible also already in 67, but was at that time still explicitly needed for the very definition of a system as a meaning context of actions [Sinnzusammenhang von Handlungen].<sup>421</sup> Meaning occupied and still occupies a strategic position in Luhmann's theory design for at least three reasons. First, as it marks the segregation of psychic and social systems on the one hand from living systems on the other, it helps to distance the theory from allusions to the -- in the context of social systems: highly problematic - - metaphor of the organism.<sup>422</sup> Second, in that meaning is the way systems handle selectivity enforced by complexity and, in other words, in that complexity and meaning are different expressions of the same fundamental problem of order, linking the two contributes "to an elimination of the technological bias of systems theory".<sup>423</sup> Finally and most important, as systems now operate in accordance with their meaning world (rather than with the world), the assumption of an all-encompassing system, which comprises, among other things, social and psychic systems, has become unnecessary.<sup>424</sup> Luhmann gives Parsons the credit for having been the last one to think of the relations between the psychic and the social as *intra-systemic* relations.<sup>425</sup>

## 116.

Again, this is not the place to give a detailed presentation of how Luhmann envisions social autopoiesis. After all, he needed 660 pages to fully introduce the idea in 1984, and the majority of his writings thereafter can be understood as attempts to theoretically digest the implications of his own proposal. Instead, an example of a social system may illustrate some of the principles of social autopoiesis. As already mentioned earlier, on the basis of the ongoing self-referential activity of an autopoietic system, everything the system uses as an entity, everything it treats as undecomposable is being produced by the system itself. In some sense, this activity of producing is to be understood as a continuously reproduced refusal to further problematize



or decompose the entities serving as elements or, in general, as unities. In other words, the production of unity corresponds to the taking for granted of the unity in question. As an example of an autopoietic system, the Department of Economics at the European University Institute uses mathematical models as basic elements of its reproduction. Each model invites the production of further models which are elaborations, deviations, clarifications, and confusions of previous models. The autopoiesis of the system consists precisely in the ongoing and unquestioned assignment of the status of an element to those models. Of course, one could, if one wanted, "deconstruct" the unity of those elements and find that it is a conglomerate of assumptions about epistemology, life, the world, the universe, and everything, but the system, as long as it operates, takes and must take all this for granted. To be sure, taking things for granted always entails a risk -- the risk, for example, to be considered as naive -- but only by accepting that risk is the system able to build up complexity and to transform unlikelihood into likelihood, so that today the models of the economists are so sophisticated that even mathematicians wonder what they are about. In general, deconstruction either destroys a system or forces it to construct new inviolate levels, i.e. new elements. But even in the case of the system's destruction, the function it fulfilled may require a functionally equivalent replacement. In this way, any deconstruction is at the same time a construction or, in other words, deconstruction and construction are, in some sense, functionally equivalent.

117.

By inserting the concept of autopoiesis into the centre of his work, Luhmann in fact achieved what he set out to do: he successfully establishes a link between observation and self-observation; he finds a theoretical context which, in its design, represents a universal problematization of identity (see section 118.), and, moreover, is thereby able to find an exit from the philosophy of the subject (section 119.). The loop between observation and self-observation is given by the theory's self-understanding as a self-referential system. In some sense, self-reference is precisely what the theory shares with what it observes. As a system-in-an-environment and as a system-with-history,

the theory is a system of the type it theorizes about.<sup>426</sup> The self-referential theory sees reality in terms of self-reference;<sup>427</sup> from its observations, it always learns something about itself and thereby becomes increasingly precise: as it observes practices, structures, problems, solutions, systems, programs always with a view towards itself, the theory will accumulate statements as to whether it is or is not a practice, structure, problem, solution, system, program. The theory's self-reference is not, then, a tautology. On the contrary, self-reference is the guarantee that the theory is able to extract guidance from its environment; it guarantees that the theory is a growing texture of analytical tools which are rendered precise in relation to each other.<sup>428</sup> Ultimately, the fruit of the always implicit self-observation should be that the theory develops its own epistemology as an (empirical!) result instead of an a priori rule which fixes how science must work.<sup>429</sup> For if scientific research is a system, then research on systems will reveal something about research itself.<sup>430</sup>

## 118.

In order to see how the insertion of autopoiesis anchors the universal problematization of identity in the theory's foundations, it is important to remember that self-reference is a mode of contact with the system's environment. If the environment did not matter at all to the system so that it did not even feel bound by its own history, it would lose all orientation and would not dispose of any selective principle that could somehow help selecting the system's next state. In other words, self-reference without environment is a paralysing tautology.<sup>431</sup> Whatever move the system makes, it is either an internally generated response to an internally identified environmental irritation or a response to the system's history, which is, after all, made up of meaning sediments left behind by those irritations. In other words, autopoiesis implies a need for causes which, for the system, appear as not produced by the system; it implies a need for the *externalization of self-reference*; it implies a need for an uninterrupted interruption of circularity; it implies the necessity of an environment.<sup>432</sup> However, how a system externalizes its self-reference, how it picks up and translates irritations into its meaning world, i.e. how it transforms noise



into order cannot be theoretically deduced. In fact, after the universalization of self-reference, the externalization of self-reference now becomes the universal reference point for functional analysis.<sup>433</sup> Thus, to inscribe self-reference as an internal feature into all living, psychic, social systems is to avoid any a priori theoretical assumptions as to what system do or do not do.<sup>434</sup> And the question of how systems come to do what they do (and nothing else) in spite of the paralysing arbitrariness of their self-reference now is the decisive *empirical* question. The major theoretical statement of the theory is, then, a two-fold methodological prescription: first, everything has to be explained, and second, everything has to be explained as a construction *relative to a system*.<sup>435</sup> Already in its architecture, Luhmann's theory of autopoiesis bars any way back to the idea of nature as being prior to cognizance, or to an anthropological conception of man, to humanism.<sup>436</sup> The strict distinction between psychic and social systems, too, serves this purpose.<sup>437</sup>

# 119.

According to Luhmann, medieval scholastic debate had identified the individual itself as the source of its individuality. In this tradition, all kinds of individual beings, not only humans, had been defined by self-reference. In the traditional connotations of hypokeimenon/subiectum -- something "lying under" and supporting attributes -- the concept of the subject had referred to something that underlies and carries the world and, therefore, to something that exists in its own right as a transcendental and not as an empirical phenomenon.<sup>438</sup> On the basis of a fundamental doubt and scepticism towards scholastic tradition, Descartes and the 17th century replaced the unitary world with a duality -- *res cogitans/res extensa* -- of subjects and objects, thereby opening the world of objects for empirical scrutiny. The only certainty that Descartes considered immune from scepticism lay in the factual operation of consciousness, which, independently of whether its contents was true or false, at least knew the facticity of its own operation: *cogito ergo sum*. Self-reference now counted as a privilege of consciousness, which could self-referentially control and check its operation; yes, it even could acknowledge that it had been wrong and

still continue to operate.<sup>439</sup> After Kant, the human individual (not only: the Cartesian mind) emerges as subject of the world; a new kind of subjective individualism became possible: "experiencing the world, the individual could claim to have a transcendental source of certainty within himself. He could set out to realize himself by realizing the world within himself. [...] The individual leaves the world in order to look at it."<sup>440</sup> Thus, in some way or other, this path of thinking kept reproducing the transcendental status of self-reference; self-reference, in other words, was being denied the status of being empirical -- even in sociology: "It is unpardonable: sociology did not see an entire world".<sup>441</sup> Luhmann's theory of autopoiesis exits from this path precisely at this point; two of its major theoretical claims are that, first, self-referential systems are empirical, i.e. that they have no transcendental status whatsoever, and second, that self-reference is an internal feature of any living, psychic, and social system and not a privilege of a specific kind of system. Systems theory dissolves the distinction between subjects and objects not by abandoning the concept of self-reference, but by generalizing it.<sup>442</sup> For Luhmann, the dissolution of this distinction requires a new form of distance between sociology and society. Since it was only the taking-for-granted of the difference between subjects and objects that enabled the subjects to (de)value their objects without affecting themselves, the end of that difference marks the end of "critical" sociology. In fact, the very idea of the "critique" needs to be reconsidered.<sup>443</sup>

## 120.

A first optimism with regard to the question of whether the program of sociological enlightenment could be translated into a theoretical working context arises in Luhmann's writings in the mid 70s -- precisely at the time when he realizes that the principle of self-reference must play a central role also in the architecture of a theory of social systems. Accordingly, this is also the time when he begins to complain that classical, linear and sequential means of presentation like books cannot adequately express the theory's design.<sup>444</sup> In 1978, the ideas of autopoiesis are implicitly present in Luhmann's work: elements do not occur as given bricks which the system simply has to put



together, but as artifacts of the very systems which consist of those elements. Since labelled theories, as he observes, are accepted more easily -- the label gives the impression of unity and closure -- Luhmann, in the late 70s, is looking for a label for such a theory based on the circular relationship between system and elements.<sup>445</sup> In a lecture held in 79 before the Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung, Luhmann for the first time presents a structure for a book on social systems. It consists of a graph which connects 12 different concepts via arrows; meaning and self-reference are the concepts with the highest number of incoming and outgoing arrows. However, the highly non-linear graph is presented as the reason why the book has not yet been written.<sup>446</sup> The second half of the 70s marks also the period when theories of self-reference explicitly occur as the fourth pillar of the project in addition to systems theory, theories of evolution and communication theory.<sup>447</sup> After Parsons' death in 1979, Luhmann concludes that self-reference and complexity were precisely the concepts which Parsons' design was unable to incorporate.<sup>448</sup> But the late 70s, early 80s also show indications of impatience. Introducing the English translation of some of his articles, he presents "the highly abstract language" as "only a hint of what would really be required".<sup>449</sup> And in the preface to the third volume of Soziologische Aufklärung (1981), he ironically presents his lecture "Unverständliche Wissenschaft", which deals with the problems of formulating a general theory, as a provisional substitute for such a theory.<sup>450</sup> However, to this collection of articles written during the previous years he adds a crucial text, entitled "Vorbemerkungen zu einer Theorie sozialer Systeme" [Preliminary Remarks on a Theory of Social Systems], which was originally prepared for that volume. To my knowledge, the label "autopoiesis" appears in his writings, then, for the first time in 1982; the justification of the idea behind the label being the absence of absolute limits of modern science's capacity for resolving: in a world which appears, in this sense, as bottomless, "elements" are being constituted only by a refusal to resolve them. They are, then, created by the system consisting of them. The same article which introduces the word "autopoiesis" also announces a "major publication on this topic".<sup>451</sup>

The book Soziale Systeme [Social Systems] itself was probably finished by December 1983, the date of its preface. Its modest subtitle - - "*Outlines* [Grundriß] of a General Theory" -- indicates doubts and hesitation. Whereas contents and the final versions of the concepts did not pose any problems in the process of writing, Luhmann spent a lot of time on the arrangement of the concepts.<sup>452</sup> The decision to put an introductory section on a "paradigm shift" in general systems theory at the beginning of the book was taken very late; it was finally taken because, at that time, general systems theory was already well introduced, i.e. for strategic reasons.<sup>453</sup> In the preface, the theory which exemplifies its own contents is presented, again, as a "labyrinth" rather than "as a highway to a happy end".<sup>454</sup> Most of the 660 pages of the book were written during a sabbatical year funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG). One year after the publication of the book, Luhmann refers to it as his "first proper publication" and, again, describes his previous works as "Nullserie" in his production of theory; future works would be located at a lower level of abstraction.<sup>455</sup>

Why did Niklas Luhmann adopt the term "autopoiesis"? At first sight, this decision seems rather unlikely. After all, he had suffered from his earlier choices of key concepts. When he spoke about "functions", he was wrongly considered a Parsonian; when he spoke about "systems", he was automatically accused of not being able to explain social change. The decision of the late sixties to speak of "complexity" and its "reduction" was a conscious attempt to avoid the worn-out concept of "contingency".<sup>456</sup> Much of Luhmann's writings are propelled by a need to run away from the wrong discussions. All the more, the decision to incorporate the label "autopoiesis" must have been difficult and risky. Especially since the ongoing debate in systems theory was far from settled. Autopoiesis could have turned (and still can turn) out as a temporary fashion provoking great excitement without leaving anything behind. Moreover, the original idea to transfer the



concept to the social sciences was not Luhmann's. Already in the late 70s, very early 80s, the issue was debated on conferences -- with Maturana, but as yet without Luhmann.<sup>457</sup> The publication of Soziale Systeme came at a time when the interest in this debate began to decrease. What all this suggests is, of course, that Niklas Luhmann made this commitment to the label "autopoiesis" very much out of the internal dynamics of his ongoing project, and that the adoption of the term can be justified only by the "perfect fit" hypothesis: autopoiesis only labelled what had been -- implicitly and perhaps even explicitly from the outset -- at the centre of Luhmann's writings. The concept helped him to organize, summarize, bundle, radicalize, and sell all his previous writings *as a unity*. In Soziale Systeme, Luhmann refers to all the various periods of his work -- not in order to establish a distance, but most of the time in order to present previous works as explications of topics he could only indicate in the new book. The book was not the final answer to the problems he had been addressing -- he never looked for final answers -- but it provided a coherent theoretical context which reflected his specific way of posing questions. And he was able to integrate the notion of autopoiesis precisely because the concepts he had been using expressed (and thus were compatible with) an emphasis on self-reference. In the new tendencies of general systems theory, he could "feel confirmed in [his] theoretical tendencies",<sup>458</sup> in fact, in the group of scientists promoting the shift towards concepts of self-reference, he even found company.<sup>459</sup> The widely held view that the introduction of the concept of autopoiesis marked a decisive discontinuity in Luhmann's oeuvre, i.e. that we have to strictly distinguish between a "pre-autopoietic" and an "autopoietic Luhmann" is unjustified.

### 123.

Accordingly, the book did not mark an endpoint in Luhmann's theoretical work. Luhmann frequently mentions that the idea of social autopoiesis remains highly disputed; and he refers to his book as being only the beginning of sociology's serious participation in this dispute.<sup>460</sup> Already in 1984, Luhmann wonders whether the complexity and the high level of abstraction does not drastically reduce

the theory's capacity for circulation. Theories of adequate complexity may "turn out to be unsaleable". More general, the open question is whether the traditionally strong impact of theories on social affairs can continue. In fact, "we cannot even be sure that 'theory' will be and will remain the right designation of [societal] self-descriptions".<sup>461</sup> The preface to the fourth volume of *Soziologische Aufklärung* attests a further need for systematical elaboration, especially related to a theory of society.<sup>462</sup> As a response to the emerging secondary literature on his work in the second half of the 80s and early 90s, Luhmann finds it "too early" to pass a final judgement on his proposal, and indicates that, "more than the publication can express", the proposal was "tormented" [geplagt] by doubts, uncertainties and already visible necessities of further learning. The change proposed by his book should not be understood as a "revolution"; the evolution of his own thinking as well as the observation of the theoretical discussion has shown to him that the thinking through of the consequences of the principle of self-reference requires a lot of time.<sup>463</sup> A publication on the issue cannot represent, then, a final report or a state of perfection.<sup>464</sup> There are also beginning doubts as to whether the introduction of the label "autopoiesis" by Maturana has indeed fulfilled its purpose, i.e. whether it has helped to stabilize a body of ideas and precise concepts against everyday language.<sup>465</sup>

## 124.

Autopoietic systems are paradoxical: whereas the term "production" implies a difference between cause and effect, the idea of "self-production" states that the different is the same.<sup>466</sup> More general, the observation of self-reference always encounters a paradox in that the two sides of the distinction the observation employs are being bent onto each other by the symmetrical, circular object of the observation. Hence, paradoxes are, if at all, problems only for the observation but not necessarily for the operation of self-referential systems; autopoiesis does not stop in face of logical contradictions.<sup>467</sup> For the observation, however, the short-circuit caused by the encountered paradox questions the presupposed distinction and thereby transforms the observation's hetero-reference into a self-reference. This (new) self-



reference is externalized precisely by hypostatizing the necessity of externalizations. For the observation can now continue by observing how its self-referential object externalizes its self-reference. In other words, it then becomes observable how the observed autopoietic system, on the basis of its ongoing self-referential reproduction, picks up irritations from its environment and integrates them into its meaning world, i.e. it becomes observable how the system narrows its choices by taking for granted what it takes for granted. In particular, the observation can see, then, that the system cannot see what it cannot see. The insight into the necessity of invisibilisations is itself the necessary invisibilisation of the observation of self-referential, observing systems.<sup>468</sup> The situation applies as well in the special case of self-observation, i.e. when the system tries to observe its unity -- with the peculiar difference that now the system has to make visible its own invisibilisations; it has to question what it takes for granted. In the late 70s, Luhmann understood the logical problems involved in this paradox of self-observation as the main reason why a synthesis of the efforts to arrive at a theory of self-referential systems had not been established by then.<sup>469</sup> It is at this point where he connected to the work of George Spencer Brown, which from then on became a crucial reference for Luhmann's work.<sup>470</sup> Spencer Brown's proto-logic allows the re-entry of a distinction on one of its sides. As an application, it proclaims the possibility that the distinction between system and environment, which the system cannot but take for granted while it operates, re-enters on the side of the system: the system is then able to reflect on everything it takes for granted as its environment. In this way, the distinction between system and environment -- which is, after all, the unity of the system -- may become a reference point for the system's operation. In some sense, the procedure of the re-entry doubles the distinction between system and environment in such a way that the double is and is not the same as its original. Spencer Brown's proto-logic represents a calculus for the processing of these kinds of paradoxes.<sup>471</sup>

Since classical logic is an attempt to exclude paradoxes from reasoning, and since traditional science somehow had inferred non-existence from logical indescribability, self-reference and its related paradoxes have been traditionally under-exposed themes in scientific inquiries. The 20th century, however, has addressed the issue and turned it into *the* philosophical theme of the time. Luhmann suggests to read Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, Wittgenstein, Gödel, Feyerabend and many others as responses to problems of self-reference.<sup>472</sup> In philosophy, paradoxes are not avoided but celebrated and even solemnized. Although this celebration has not always been fruitful, the question remains whether philosophy observed features of modern society which sociology, lacking a proper terminology, has simply overlooked.<sup>473</sup> In this context, the concept of the re-entry fills a crucial gap as it is supposed to lead to a non-arbitrary thematization of self-reference. Through a re-entry, systems may obtain access to higher degrees of complexity; a representation of the distinction between system and environment within the system at least opens the possibility of a more coherent, focused and efficient exploitation of irritations picked up from the environment. Because the re-entry can sharply increase the selectivity of the system, it can process larger sets of potential selections. The re-entry is the transformation of a paradox into complexity. Retrospectively, Luhmann noticed that the creative power of paradoxes was one of the themes he neglected in Soziale Systeme.<sup>474</sup> An immediate conclusion for theoretical work is, of course, the directive that a theory should preferably be based on distinctions which allow re-entries.<sup>475</sup>

The inclusion of the "explosive" self-reference into systems theory must have consequences for epistemology -- this was the insight which ended Soziale Systeme. The final chapter of the book deduced the two major novelties of the theory which would have epistemological implications: first, the exclusion of the inclusion of uncontrollable premises, and second, the theory's re-entry into its own domain.<sup>476</sup>



Accordingly, much of Luhmann's recent work is on epistemology. For in that the theory rejects finalities, it cannot but question on what stable grounds the program of sociological enlightenment could be anchored.<sup>477</sup> At stake is, in other words, the status of the work in relation to reality. Luhmann's recent emphasis on Heinz von Foerster's second order cybernetics is implicitly an answer to this question. Two concepts are crucial: the concept of the eigenvalue or eigenbehaviour and the principle of second order observations. A world in which elements are undecomposable only relative to a system neither puts natural ends to observation nor provides natural objectives for observation. A first question is then whether, at least in principle, the observation of observations of observations of observations of ... may lead to some kind of result, i.e. to a situation of relative stability in which, to some extent, observations are being confirmed by further observations. At a higher level of abstraction, the question is whether the recursive application of an operation to itself converges, and the answer is, of course: sometimes it does. For von Foerster, this insight justifies a definition of cognition as an aimless recursive computation of computations of computations of computations of ... . In the case of convergence, the result is called *eigenvalue* or *eigenbehaviour* of the operation in question.<sup>478</sup> Already in relatively simple situations, the existence -- not to mention the specific form -- of eigenvalues cannot be theoretically deduced; eigenvalues can only be produced: they will or will not be found in a recursive application of operations.<sup>479</sup> The stability of eigenvalues is based, then, only on the recursiveness of the procedure which has brought them about and, of course, on the fact that they were (somehow) brought about. The concept does not look for assurances in some kind of correspondence (adaptation!) to an environment.<sup>480</sup> As a consequence of this conceptualization of cognition, Luhmann suggests to regard the self-reference of a (social) theory, i.e. whether or not it can be directed towards itself, whether it applies to itself, as a necessary precondition for "correctness".<sup>481</sup>

Systems producing their elements, the building up of complexity via re-entries, the procedural establishment of eigenvalues -- all this

brings the theory of autopoiesis close to epistemological positions usually categorized as *constructivism*.<sup>482</sup> By accepting this label, Luhmann faces the usual accusations of inviting relativism, solipsism, and arbitrariness. None of these terms, however, adequately grasps Luhmann's position. Luhmann does not deny that the real world exists, that a real contact with it is possible and necessary as a condition for the real operation of systems. What is being denied is that the world contains something that corresponds to negativity, possibility, distinctions, denotations, uncertainty, selectivity, and to all other modifications of meaning which for the system warrant that it can connect further operations to its operations. Autopoietic systems -- as empirical systems -- operate (really) in a real world but reality is precisely the sphere which remains inaccessible to them; reality is precisely what remains cognitively inaccessible.<sup>483</sup> Cognition is nothing but whatever results from a transformation of limitations into conditions of augmentability; and the non-arbitrariness of cognition is due only to the fact that these transformations are being performed systematically, i.e. by a system-with-history and a system-in-an-environment. This perspective indeed represents a radical relativism, but it is a relativism which has lost its opposite concept.<sup>484</sup> Moreover, the acknowledgement of relativity does not amount to an acknowledgement of arbitrariness. On the contrary, to accept relativism is to make inevitable the question of how systems narrow their choices, how they select what they select (and nothing else). Relativity does not lead to an "anything goes" but to processes of self-binding, deflexibilization and the establishment of traditions.<sup>485</sup> For whatever systems do, they only do what they do. Arbitrariness does not exist in the real world.

## 128.

Observations of observations are *observations of second order*. The concept refers to the observation of other observing systems or to self-observation requiring either spatial or temporal distance respectively. By observing observations, the distinction which the (first) observation can only use but not observe becomes itself observable: one can see what the observing system cannot see and that the



observing system cannot see what it cannot see. The second order observation sees as a selection, i.e. as contingent what the first observation must take for granted. In some sense, this insight into the observable unobservabilities, i.e. into the necessity and visibleness of *blind spots* replaces the traditional a priori justifications of epistemologies. The necessity of blind spots now occupies the place where earlier a conscious self-confirming reasoning had been; systems of recursive observations move to the place where the subject had found self-confirmation in the verification of the a priori conditions of cognition and knowledge.<sup>486</sup> The level of second order observations does not mark a "higher" level which is somehow privileged. As observations, second order observations are bound to the same limitations: they, too, employ and thus do not observe a distinction; they, too, need and create a blind spot.<sup>487</sup> The question is not, then, what the second order observation gains as compared to the observed observation. Rather, the question is what eigenvalues -- if at all -- a system generates which directs the recursiveness of its observations towards the observation of what earlier observations were not able to see. For Luhmann, this is a crucial -- through and through *empirical* -- question about modern society.<sup>488</sup>

## 129.

More or less from the outset, Luhmann's work on a general theory of social systems has been paralleled by theoretical and empirical undertakings aimed at a conceptualization of the specificity of modern society -- a concern which, according to Luhmann, had been the initial task of sociology as it emerged in the 19th century.<sup>489</sup> The major result of these efforts is Luhmann's proposal to distinguish three different stages in the evolution of society according to its primary principle of differentiation. First, the principle of *segmentation* means that the subsystems of society presuppose their environment as a set of equal subsystems, so that e.g. tribes only see other tribes in their environment. Second, the principle of *stratification* means that subsystems presuppose their relation to their environment in terms of a rank order of systems. Finally, the principle of *functional differentiation* means that subsystems specialize themselves in specific functions and

presuppose that their environment cares for the rest.<sup>490</sup> The evolution of European society is characterized, then, as a transition from segmentary to stratificatory, and then from stratificatory to functional differentiation.<sup>491</sup> According to Luhmann, only modern European society (and those following its model) implemented functional differentiation as its primary principle of differentiation.<sup>492</sup> The adoption of functional differentiation has several momentous implications: an increase in complexity, a loss of redundancy, an increasing interdependence and differentiation of subsystems, an increase in visible contingency,<sup>493</sup> the giving-up of the possibility of an unrivalled representation of society within society,<sup>494</sup> a release of further possibilities of negation,<sup>495</sup> the transformation of subsystems into self-substitutive systems,<sup>496</sup> an increasing distance and mutual differentiation of psychic and social systems,<sup>497</sup> etc. Luhmann considers society's move to functional differentiation as irreversible.<sup>498</sup>

### 130.

As soon as action, in the late 70s, ceased to be the element of social systems and became socially constituted via attribution, the previously introduced theoretical perspective inspired an empirical research project: the transition from stratificatory to functional differentiation should be displayed also in a transformation of the ways actions were communicatively constituted. In other words, structural changes of society should have been prepared and paralleled by changes at the level of semantics.<sup>499</sup> In 1980, Luhmann begins to publish studies on "historical-social semantics" which document the semantic transition to modernity. The studies are collected in a series of books entitled *Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik* [Societal Structure and Semantics]; by now three volumes were published in 1980, 1981, and 1989 respectively. Studies on the semantics of love, originally planned as a contribution to the series, soon increased in size and then developed into a separate book, *Liebe als Passion* [Love as Passion].<sup>500</sup> Luhmann emphasizes that these studies do not presuppose causality at the level of ideas; the picture is not that ideas somehow go directly from culture into the minds and from there into the hands and tongues. Instead, the assumption is that the possibility to be



different stimulates activities from which success selects systematizable contents. Accordingly, the objective of these studies was (is) not to provide causal explanations.<sup>501</sup>

131.

In agreement with the overall design of his theory, Luhmann links the characterization of modern society and the epistemology of second order cybernetics in a cyclical way.<sup>502</sup> For a constructivist epistemology corresponds precisely to the way functional differentiation conditions the possibilities for societal self-observation. In lack of an archimedean point, society has to reduce the social impudence of knowledge: it is easier to propose and to follow constructions than to claim and enforce perception as truth. Constructivism marks an endpoint in this development.<sup>503</sup> Polycontextuality, observations of second order, and the recursive distinguishing of distinctions represent the semantic requirements of functional differentiation. An epistemology based on these concepts witnesses and exemplifies the adaptation of science to modern society.<sup>504</sup> For science, this implies a transposition from what- to how-questions; for society it leads to an emphasis on contingency. What had been nature at some point is now being revealed as the consequence of selections, i.e. decisions -- even if the identity of the decision-maker cannot be established.<sup>505</sup> Again, the consequences are observable at the semantic level: the semantics of "danger" is replaced by the semantics of "risks"; the future is no longer an extension of the past and becomes dependent on decisions.<sup>506</sup> Society responds in a paradoxical way: with the institutionalization of freedom.<sup>507</sup>

## *Five* The Art of the Re-entry

132.

"Attention, ne laissez pas passer le génie", Georges Dumézil wrote to his colleagues at the Collège de France who where about to decide whether Michel Foucault should be admitted to the famous institution.<sup>508</sup> For Foucault, his chair at the Collège must have seemed as a deliverance: from one day to the other he was able to bypass all academic procedures in order to obtain the maximum degree of freedom and independence French academic life could possibly concede. From now on, the only formal requirement he had to fulfil was to give weekly lectures over three months per year and to present new material each year. Although Foucault, who always took this requirement very seriously, would now and then struggle to live up to this task, there can be little doubt that his position at the collège provided optimal conditions for the pursuit of a truly independent line of inquiry. Nietzsche, too, had his mentor, Friedrich-Wilhelm Ritschl, who would promote him to a chair at the University of Bâle. At the age of only 24, Nietzsche bypassed all the standard academic procedures and suddenly arrived at the top without having written a proper dissertation. Still, at that time, he was part of a discipline, philology, and his chair at Bâle both prolonged his allegiance to the discipline and accelerated his search for independence. And, finally, Niklas Luhmann, too, eventually arrived at the top of a discipline without having been disciplined in the usual way. Promoted by Helmut Schelsky, his first two books, written out of his own personal theoretical interests, ended up as dissertation and even habilitation of Professor Niklas Luhmann.

133.

All three, then, eventually found themselves in a position which gave them a so far unknown degree of freedom, time, and independence that was now to be translated into creative work. They



were given the opportunity to develop their works according to their own ideas, to choose topics (almost) at will, and to decide for themselves which way to go. Having come thus far, they were free to pursue their works not according to the expectations of disciplines, not as answers to questions prescribed externally, but instead as autonomous projects which could unfold also with an eye to themselves, to their unities, i.e. as *autonomous pieces of art*. And on their routes towards autonomy, Nietzsche found himself or better: he *created* himself, Foucault discovered self-relations, and Niklas Luhmann came to emphasize self-reference. In all three cases, the cutting off of external references, of references to nature and, in particular, to human nature, required some thematization of self-reference in order to give unity to the work. Thereby, self-reference substituted conceptual completeness and turned the works of these authors into practices: flexible, transformable, self-corrective, recursive, and moving. The incorporation of self-reference, however, did not occur with tantamount ease in the three cases. For Nietzsche and Foucault, the discovery of self-reference came as a true discovery: as something that had to be *added* to their works, something that had been lacking before. And their struggle with this acknowledgment that the work, instead of being anchored in itself, had been based on an uncritical adoption of externally given configurations of thought, as well as with the subsequent effort to establish autonomy and unity through self-referential closure was at the heart of their crises. In contrast, self-reference had been an explicit part of Luhmann's work both in its contents and in its design from the outset. In fact, the discovery of self-reference must have occurred before Luhmann started publishing and might even mark the very origin of his project. *This* re-entry, the first encounter with self-reference, is not, then, part of the subsequent work, which *therefore* unfolded smoothly, steadily, with changes but, as far as known, without conceptual turning points loaded with personal crises.

134.

Moreover Luhmann achieved what Foucault had been striving for throughout much of his early project: perhaps one could not say that Luhmann writes *in order to* have no face -- at least he does not

mention this to be an explicit goal (a silence which is, too, part of having no face). However, in his work, Niklas Luhmann, *his face*, seems absent -- so absent indeed that he even questions the authorship of his (!) writings.<sup>509</sup> In his absence, in this explicit devaluation of biography, Luhmann exemplifies the contents of his theory: namely, in this case, the strict distinction between psychic (personal) and social systems. The theory has place for him, the psychic system Niklas Luhmann, but as communication, it must focus on communicative, i.e. social systems. The theory's competence stems precisely from the fact that it restricts itself to what it knows about communication *from being communication*. With his theory, Luhmann cannot be polemical; discretion and tact are being anchored in the theory's design. The absence of polemics was also characteristic for the work of Michel Foucault, but his attempts to write in order to have no face, all these attempts about which he spoke and wrote a lot, were successful, if at all, only in a perverse sense: in the cult which soon evolved around his name, his face was multiplied, diversified, diffused, dispersed, disfigured, and ultimately defaced.

### 135.

The works of Foucault and Luhmann are not just complementary with regard to the way the authors (dis-)appear in them but also with regard to their designs. In their works, the requirement to rely less and less on pre-given entities such as "reason", "nature" or "human nature" and to ensure that everything which is taken-for-granted in the course of the work remains open for problematization at a later stage, was translated into very different, almost opposite forms of research practices. For there are two ways of saying nothing, i.e. of abstaining from privileging sectors of reality as ontological: one could either remain silent, refrain from general theoretical claims or, in contrast, one could promise to say everything, to include every-thing into the realm of possible problematizations precisely by proclaiming universality. Concrete research which follows the first of these two lines of inquiry will form a carefully organized sequence of empirical studies where theoretical claims are not explicitly part of the work but implicit in its organization or perhaps even added by interviews and texts which are



and are not part of this work. The second line of inquiry is likely to be translated into a universal theory, a network of ideas and concepts stabilizing each other, which parallels and guides empirical studies. I understand the works of Foucault and Luhmann as representatives of these two opposite or complementary ways of avoiding a priori commitments. In other words, they represent two different modes of implementing the same attitude towards research and, if you will, towards the world.<sup>510</sup> It is this common attitude which makes it possible to relate Foucault's and Luhmann's projects; and out of this attitude the two projects unfolded in different directions.

136.

The thematization of self-relations and self-reference requires conceptual provisions for logical paradoxes. The circle defies whatever distinctions are imposed on it -- including the distinction between "true" and "false". The incorporation of self-reference amounts, therefore, to an exit from logic. Whatever entity is considered to be self-referential, its operation cannot be understood as being subject to logic and, if you will, truth. If the access to novelty is directed internally, if, in other words, there is no direct, immediate input of novelty from outside without the cooperation of the self-referential entity in question, the production of novelty will have to be a paradoxical move. To make provisions for such moves is to admit that those entities empowered with self-referential operational modes actively employ and use logic rather than passively obey requirements of logical consistency. *The problematization of truth and the thematization of self-reference are two sides of the same coin.* Both Foucault and Luhmann therefore had to explicitly introduce concepts which reflect the logical incompleteness and hence creativity of self-reference. In the work of Foucault, the concept of "problematization" serves this purpose; Luhmann solved the problem by adopting Spencer Brown's notion of the "re-entry" -- the very same notion which, by the way, is also at the centre of this essay. The relation between the two concepts is obvious: in Foucault's use, "problematization" refers to the re-entry of "being" into the side of "thought" in the distinction between "being" and "thought". The two concepts occupy strategic places in the respective design's. The unity

of the work, its *completeness* is achieved only through the inclusion and, if you will, domestication of logical *incompleteness*.

137.

It would be easy to give a puzzling list of sentences which, almost up to the choice of specific words!, were written by Foucault as well as by Luhmann. And yet, even if the words are the same, their contexts are completely different. Luhmann writes precisely in a space where Foucault never wanted to write, but he writes in such a way that Foucault, could he have read and followed, would have rediscovered his (Foucault's) own concerns. The two works are like parallel lines: the same and still completely different; the same and still without intersection points. These two lines delineate a semantic space in which it is possible to speak about the world without taking its form and its features for granted, without accumulating final, ultimate verdicts, without restricting one's ability to learn.

138.

And the first one who glimpsed at this space in which the world looks like a boundless fluid, permanently moving without fixed points, without orientation -- was Friedrich Nietzsche. Yet Nietzsche never managed to conquer this new world he discovered. To be sure, like no one before him he was prepared to question whatever his time took for granted; like no one before him he problematized the idea of truth, but, conspicuously, where Foucault and Luhmann speak of "problematization" and "re-entries" respectively, Nietzsche only offered Zarathustra's silence. Nietzsche never developed a concept that would stand for paradoxes, for logical incompleteness -- and the price he paid for this, if you will, *omittance* was the incompleteness of his work. However he tried to put his work together, to arrive at the great synthesis, his efforts turned out to be a torture and, finally, impossible: Der Wille zur Macht remained unwritten; his work did not close. Perhaps he was, after all, too systematic, unable or unwilling to make compromises with his arch-enemy and love: with truth. And yet



precisely the self-reference of his work would have required such compromises in the form of explicit provisions for logical incompleteness. Instead, Nietzsche could not think beyond the self-overcoming of Christian truthfulness. He could think only in terms of this enormous, ultimate crisis which he, Nietzsche, embodied; he thought in terms of necessities rather than possibilities. Whereas for Foucault and Luhmann, truth is linked to openness, infinity, change, variation, and to creation, Nietzsche considered living in truth a self-restriction, a straight-jacket; ultimately, truth and even thought were hostile to life.<sup>511</sup> Still, he once got out of this straight-jacket and thus gained access to the novelty of a world without god, a world that referred only to itself, a *self-referential* world -- but he did not take off (or did he?); he remained a *frightened* eagle, caught in his time and his loneliness.

139.

In his last interview, Foucault admitted that he was "just a Nietzschean", and in fact, after he resolved his crisis, the design of his work was almost congruent with Nietzsche's design. Yet the two projects evolved in very different ways. In some sense, and perhaps precisely because he admired Nietzsche's oeuvre, Foucault became a reversed Nietzsche: he started where Nietzsche had left his work, with a work on madness, and ended where Nietzsche had started, with studies on Greek antiquity (in which he, like Nietzsche, put special emphasis on the role of Socrates for Western thought). And even if Foucault closely linked his own concerns with Nietzsche's, the two projects ended on different, almost opposite notes. Whereas Nietzsche never got rid of his suspicion towards thought, Foucault finally elevated thought to be *the* source of novelty: through thought, being gained distance to itself, was able to look at itself, to reflect on itself and, then, to change. Occasionally, Nietzsche came close to the gates of similar views. In that being established distance to itself, something "new, deep, unheard-of, mysterious, contradictory, promising [zukunftsvoll]" arose on earth, a "spectacle, too nice, too wonderful, too paradoxical", which made "man one of the most unexpected, most exciting strokes of luck" ever played by "Zeus or chance". Through that distance, man found in himself "an interest, a tension, an hope, almost a certainty, as

if, with man, something was announced, something prepared; as if man was not a goal, but just a way, an incident, a bridge, a great promise..."<sup>512</sup> But for Nietzsche, this distance between being and being remained a distance that being maintained *against* itself; the paradox he discovered was man's suffering from himself. This distance was perhaps creative, perhaps necessary, but ultimately a *tragic* distance. The re-entry he could think of was an instant, a crisis of the greatest proportions, an event which would happen once and thereby fundamentally remove or alter the distance between being and being. *And, again, he exemplified this view.* But the re-entry was not, for Nietzsche, something that one could purposefully employ, again and again, *in a practice*. The re-entry, the paradox was dangerous, accessible only to "daredevils of the spirit".<sup>513</sup>

#### 140.

The fact that the projects of Nietzsche and Foucault ended on such different (but also: similar) notes does not contradict my observation that their intrinsic geometries finally coincided. The re-entries of the projects into themselves only ensured or even installed their distinctness and independence. For in that self-observation becomes systematically linked to observation, a project will inevitably evolve in a *path-dependent* way: its future depends on *how* it has arrived at the present. Since Foucault and Nietzsche arrived at their points of re-entry on different routes, they could not but continue on different routes in the aftermath. Whatever the intrinsic geometry of an observation after a re-entry, the re-entry (only) makes the project more distinct, more differentiated: similarities and differences to its environment are likely to surface more sharply afterwards. In particular, congruence at the level of geometry does not necessarily imply congruence at the level of contents. Its intrinsic geometry is, after all, just *one* aspect of the work among many.



Accordingly, none of the previous remarks should be misunderstood as evaluations or as a critique. At the level of its geometry, Nietzsche's work is not less sound, or less relevant, or less advanced than Foucault's or Luhmann's. No criteria exist upon which a hierarchy among the three thinkers can be established. Writing in their respective times, struggling with their respective problems, they all managed to start their projects, which, after some time, were able to run on their own. They all arrived at a recursive design of their works, they all must have performed, then, *the art of the re-entry*. Due to this recursiveness, due to this independence!, the three thinkers remained and remain lonely figures in academic life -- in spite of their success and in spite of the discussions they provoke. Already in 1983, during his lifetime!, a bibliography of works on Michel Foucault listed 791 entries -- but none of these entries in any sense eliminates this loneliness.<sup>514</sup> And if their audiences responded or respond at all, then this response often consists of puzzlement, confusion, evasion, outspoken silence.<sup>515</sup> For who, given the time constraints of academic work, wants to take up the burden to work oneself into the labyrinths and loops of their thinking, into their endless bibliographies, into the sheer complexity of their oeuvres?

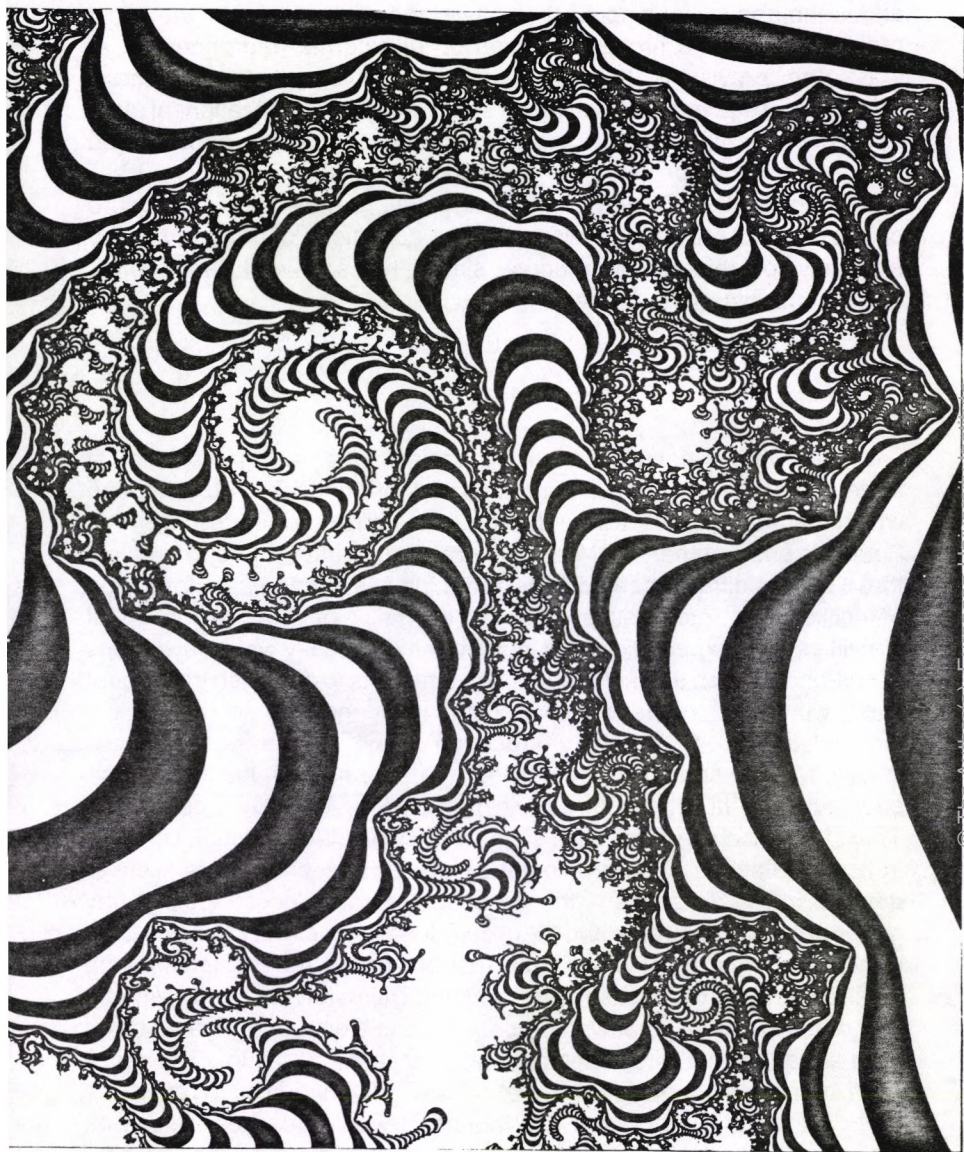
Due to the recursiveness and non-linearity of the designs of their work practices, these thinkers were able to realize a degree of complexity in their writings which is partly the reason for their uneasy and problematic reception. If self-observation and observation are linked, then one can see the observer in what he observes. Having traced the observer as he re-appears in his observations, we can, of course, continue and try to delineate what this "doubled" observer observes. In other words, if the observer recurs in his observations, then he recurs *with* his activity of observing and accordingly *with* what he observes. Thus, in the observation, the observed somehow contains itself within itself. The situation is more complex than the image one can see on a television when the same television set is filmed by a

camera and shows what the camera films. For in the present context, each step from observation to the observer and from the observer to the observation is logically incomplete and thus a source of novelty. The situation is not, then, a perfect circle, a tautology, but instead a structure of infinite depth as each step opens the procedure for distortions and deviations. For us, as we observe (from the outside) and study the works of Nietzsche, Foucault, and Luhmann, the situation is likely to resemble a *fractal* image: an image where the magnification of arbitrarily small sections reveals new details which almost look like the original image (see overleaf for an example). No wonder, then, that the reception of the work will be infinite. No wonder, also, that the reception reveals as much as -- or perhaps even more than -- about the recipient as about the work.

143.

One can distinguish two different ways of questioning and observing society. First, one can start from assumptions about how the world should be, about what should be considered normal, true, correct or perfect. And then, with those assumptions, one can observe the world, accumulate confirmations of the original assumptions and administer deviations. From this perspective, deviations are automatically exceptions and therefore the preferred objects of explanations: the "social-problems-sociology", for example, is interested in the history and conditions of slums, but not in a genealogy of the comfort of city life.<sup>516</sup> In contrast, the second approach starts by declaring the normal to be unlikely. It dissolves the normal, the self-evident, the grounds of everyday life into the realm of the unlikely, and then faces the task to make comprehensible how the now unlikely *nevertheless* occurs with sufficient likelihood. This second perspective combines, if you will, "constructivism" and "deconstructivism". Niklas Luhmann observed that an interest in the second type of questioning recurs almost periodically: at first with Descartes and Hobbes in the mid 17th century, then around 1800 inspired by the French Revolution, and then again in the middle of the 20th century, but now the transformation of the normal into the unlikely takes place in the demarcated sphere of science and in a more radical and theoretically dispersed way.<sup>517</sup>







Clearly, Nietzsche (as a transient figure, i.e. as a precursor), Foucault, and Luhmann all exemplify the latter type of inquiries in the most radical way.<sup>518</sup> The problematization of all external references or, at least, the provisions they made for a problematization of those references required, as we have seen, some thematization of self-reference. And it is here, in the problems these thinkers encountered in their efforts to establish a workable design which radically implements a specific way of observing, where they could turn out to be most useful for our own work. For the conditions of modern society are likely to preferentially produce similar types of work, and similar types of doubts in the future.

144.

For what is peculiar about this society which assigns an almost eerie and permanent relevance to the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, and which cannot explain away the doubts expressed in the work of Foucault and Luhmann? What is characteristic about modern society that it cannot diffuse those doubts about the costs of the transformation of unlikelihood into likelihood, about the risks of the building up of stabilities (and expectations) on instabilities? A society which, by means of self-observation and self-description, attempts to establish truth about itself will most probably, sooner or later, encounter the logical incompleteness of this very procedure. Due to the self-reference involved in the search for truth about the self, no self-description can ever achieve the status of a truth proven in a logically closed way. Thus, for logical reasons, each suggestion of a self-description contains in itself the seeds of its problematization. This mechanism is likely to develop into a dynamics -- the dynamics of truthfulness: society may generate and follow, now and then, self-descriptions, but it will find itself unable to argumentatively diffuse doubts about the status and the implicit liabilities of such self-descriptions. Ultimately, this may amount to a renunciation of what was proposed a societal truth and thus, given truth-expectations, to disappointment, to a sense of failure. The result is an intensification of self-observation: we must try harder to reveal the truth! If the truth is not were we thought it would be, then it must be elsewhere; it must be deeper, more complex, more subtle. Its self-



reference and, hence, its logical incompleteness turns the search for truth into an *autocatalytic* process, nurtured by the impossibility to anchor self-descriptions in truth.

145.

The dynamics of truthfulness is the invisible black board mentioned in the introduction of this essay upon which thinkers are being grouped, categorized, and measured: whoever tells the truth about society participates and thus continues this dynamics. And as society has to extract and generalize its truth from more and more successive self-descriptions, the task gets increasingly delicate. For whatever new societal truth is being proposed, society will have to convince itself that the new truth, as truth, has been there all the time and in fact can explain both the success and the failure of previous truths. *If* (if!) we follow the lines of this thinking, we may ask what kinds of societal self-descriptions this dynamics is likely to produce in the long run. Are there, in other words, self-descriptions which are more resistant to this alternation of hope and frustration, more resistant to disappointment? If truth is to be deduced from an increasingly diverse history, the most resistant form of truth-telling is, evidently, to claim that there is no truth. The most resistant form that can evolve under the dynamics of truthfulness is a self-renouncing truth, a paradox: the uncertainty becomes certain; at least in one's doubts one can be sure. Once proposed and established, this most abstract truth sponges upon any further disappointment encountered by other proposals. And as soon as the self-renouncing truth prevails, as soon as it becomes *true*, society puts itself into a delicate tension. For on the one hand, this new truth will be as unprovable as any other truth. It cannot escape the logical incompleteness, which is, after all, the basis of its success. It *must* remain vulnerable. Still, on the other hand, the self-renouncing truth can only be the final and ultimate attempt to save the very idea of living in truth, to save the idea of truth. The dilemma is, then, that the persistence of a self-renouncing truth depends on conditions which also expose it to dangers to which its proponents, if they value truth at all, are likely to respond in dramatic ways.<sup>519</sup>

For a society which lives with and in a self-renouncing truth, a line of questioning which proclaims what is true and then registers and explains evident exceptions will become increasingly untenable. The pretentiousness of truth now presents itself as an insistence on contingency. For some time, the slaughtering of what was normal, the dissolution of what was taken for granted will be celebrated as "liberation", but this "deconstruction" does not as yet provide a stable position; it is not even based on a complete question. For if, in this way, the normal is exposed as contingent, then the question is precisely how it nevertheless became *normal*, i.e. how it became possible, through processes of self-binding, to build up and maintain expectations, to build up complexity. Much of the discussion on "post-modernity" misses this second, somewhat indirect consequence of a self-renouncing truth. While prominent truth-tellers announce the end of truth, modern society continues to do what it does: to build up complexity on the basis of the transformation of unlikelihood into likelihood, and thus to generate expectations. Post-modernity takes place, then, only in semantics, leaving fallow what would be most crucial: its relation to *being*.

And precisely this, being, was taken into account by Nietzsche, Foucault, and Luhmann. They developed and exemplified lines of questioning which seem to fulfil the requirements of a self-renouncing truth and hence of a radically modern society. The persistent relevance of Nietzsche should not come, then, as a surprise. He anticipated what post-modernity has as yet to discover. Similarly, the dynamics of truthfulness is likely to return again and again to the works of Michel Foucault and Niklas Luhmann. Their relevance remains as yet to be fully appreciated. For they provide examples of how, through a careful substitution of self-references for external references, one can continue to pose questions, to observe!, even under the paradoxical conditions of a contingent truth and a true contingency. We may not want to merely copy their designs, but at least we can learn from the problems they encountered with the designs they employed. In this essay, I tried



to provide and test some conceptual tools which may further this learning process.<sup>520</sup>

148.

In his late methodological writings, Michel Foucault emphasized that "what [he has] tried to maintain for many years, is the effort to isolate some of the elements that might be useful for a history of truth".<sup>521</sup> Although he indeed provided more than just "useful elements", the task of writing such a history of truth remains to be done. From everything I have said in this essay and from the task itself, it is clear that a history of truth must be framed in a self-referential design. But my essay suggests even more. It suggests that the history of truth can be traced down by relying on *indirect* evidence, namely on the status and the location of self-reference in various truthful, societal self-descriptions. For, again, the problematization of truth as the ultimate external reference goes hand in hand with a thematization of self-reference. A history of truth and a history of self-reference are *complementary* projects. We may have to go back, for this purpose, to antiquity, above all back to Descartes, then to Kant, Nietzsche, Foucault, Luhmann, and others. We may have to re-enter the circle.

149.

The bottle of Klein, named after the great mathematician Felix Klein (1849-1925), is a geometrical surface which one obtains by attaching the circular ends of a four-dimensional cylinder to one another, but with opposite orientation. Clearly, it is somewhat difficult to imagine the result in four dimensions. But we may project the whole thing onto three-dimensional space, just as the projection of a ball from three-dimensional space onto the two-dimensional plane will produce a disk. If we project, then, from four to three dimensions, the result will look like a bottle whose neck eventually re-enters the bottle:



As the figure indicates, the re-entry makes self-intersection unavoidable. Moreover, the points where the bottle re-enters itself, i.e. the points of self-intersection form a circle (a cross-section of the neck of the bottle). These points are called *singularities*. In general, singularities are characterized by the fact that, in some sense, they have multiple meanings. In our example, the points on the circle belong, on the one hand, to the bottle's body and, on the other hand, to its neck. Singularities are always important. Even global characteristics of surfaces often depend only on what happens in arbitrarily close neighbourhoods of those singularities. Surfaces without singularities are mostly easy to comprehend and to classify; singularities, in contrast, make the life of mathematicians both difficult and interesting. The bottle of Klein itself, by the way, does not have singularities. In four dimensions, the re-entry is possible without ambiguities. But in three dimensions, i.e. after the projection, there is simply not enough twisting room for an unproblematic re-entry.



# Endnotes

[KGA: Friedrich Nietzsche -- Kritische Gesamtausgabe Briefwechsel, edited by Giorgio Colli, Mazzino Montinari, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975-); KGA Werke: Friedrich Nietzsche -- Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke, edited by Giorgio Colli, Mazzino Montinari, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967-)]

1. In the following I will be using the terminology of George Spencer Brown, Laws of Form, (New York: Julian Press, 1972), and Heinz von Foerster, Observing Systems, (Seaside, CA: Intersystems Publications, 2nd ed. 1984), and thus also of Niklas Luhmann, Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1990).

2. The ultimate reason is to be found in the works of Alan M. Turing and Kurt Gödel. For a collection of their papers (and those of Church, Kleene, Post) relating to "undecidability" see Martin D. Davis, The Undecidable, (New York: Raven Press, 1965).

3. Letter to Malwida von Meysenbug, 25.10.74, KGA II,3, No.398; letter to Bülow, 2.1.75, KGA II,5, No.412.

4. Letter to Malwida von Meysenbug, 25.10.74, KGA II,3, No.398.

5. Letter to Overbeck, 20./21.8.1881, KGA III,1, No.139.

6. Letter to Rée, late August 1881, KGA III,1, No.144.

7. Letter to Gersdorff, 26.9.1875, KGA II,5, No.487; letter to Heinrich Romundt, 26.9.1875, KGA II,5, No.488.

8. The French translation of Richard Wagner in Bayreuth was published in 1877; it was prepared by Nietzsche's friend Marie Baumgartner.

9. Nietzsche's pension was extended. From 1885 onwards he received 2/3 of his previous grant for three more years.

10. After it became clear that Nietzsche would go to Bâle, the University in Leipzig quickly accepted the papers Nietzsche had published by then as a dissertation. For the story behind Nietzsche's move to Bâle, see Werner Ross, Der ängstliche Adler. Friedrich Nietzsches Leben, (München: Kastell, 1990), pp.188-211; Ivo Frenzel, Friedrich Nietzsche, (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1966), pp.38-42.

11. See his letter to his friend Erwin Rohde from 16.1.1869, written *after* his professorship in Bâle had already been a fait accompli. Nietzsche wrote that "only last week I wanted

to suggest to you that we should study chemistry and throw philology to where it belongs: to the household of the olden times (Urväter-Hausrat)". KGA I,2, No.608.

12. Carl Pletsch, Young Nietzsche -- Becoming a Genius, (New York: Free Press, 1991), interprets Nietzsche's early intellectual trajectory -- the search for a task of his own -- as an attempt to live and realize the "culturally defined role of genius" (p.15). On this role, see in particular his chapter "A Genealogy of Genius", pp.1-16.

13. Letter to Ritschl, 30.1.1872, KGA II,1, No.194.

14. Ritschl's letter to Nietzsche, 14.2.1872, KGA II,2, No.285. In his notebook (31.12.1871), Ritschl had called Die Geburt der Tragödie a "geistreiche Schwiemelei". See also Ross, Der ängstliche Adler, pp.293-308.

15. Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, Zukunftsphilologie. Eine Erwiderung auf Friedrich Nietzsches "Geburt der Tragödie", Berlin 1872. The texts produced by the fight about The Birth of Tragedy were collected by Karlfried Günther, Der Streit um Nietzsches "Geburt der Tragödie", (Hildesheim: Olms, 1969).

16. See the chronology of Nietzsche's life in the appendix of Karl Schlechta (ed.), Friedrich Nietzsche. Werke in drei Bänden, (München: Hanser, 1977), vol.3, pp.1359-1382. See also Nietzsche's letter to Rohde, 25.10.72, KGA II,3, No.265.

17. See the section "Von den Gelehrten" in the second part of Also sprach Zarathustra.

18. Letter to Gersdorff, 3.6.72, KGA II,3, No.226; to Rohde, 8.6.72, KGA II,3, No.227; to Gersdorff, 10.6.72, KGA II,3, No.228; to Ritschl, 26.6.72, KGA II,3, No.235.

19. Letter to Senger, mid November 1872, KGA II,3, No.273.

20. Also in Ecce Homo Nietzsche acknowledges his debt to Heraclitus. See Ecce Homo, Die Geburt der Tragödie, No.3. See also his remarks even later in Götzendämmerung [The Twilight of the Idols], Die "Vernunft" in der Philosophie, No.2.

21. Letter to Rohde, 3.11.1867, KGA I,2, No.552.

22. For this quote and the following remarks see especially Arthur Schopenhauer, Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung 1, (1819) (Sämtliche Werke, Bd.I), (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp stw, 1986), Drittes Buch, §36, pp.264-277, and in the second volume (1844), Drittes Buch, Kapitel 31: "Vom Genie", pp.484-514 (492).

23. See the pathos in "Autobiographisches aus den Jahren 1856 bis 1869", in the three volume edition (Karl Schlechta), Volume 3, pp.133-4.

24. Ross contemplates that from the outset Ritschl saw in Nietzsche an intellectual spokesman for Wagner. Ritschl's counterpart and enemy in Bonn, Jahn, at this time already was a quite well known expert on Mozart and had written a biography of the composer. Apparently, Jahn was involved in the polemics against Wagner. From this perspective, the carefully staged meeting between Wagner and Nietzsche looks like a late



revenge Ritschl's on Jahn. Ross, Der ängstliche Adler, pp.168-177. For Nietzsche's account of the first meeting, see his letter to Rohde, 9.11.1868, KGA I,2, No.599.

25. See Schopenhauer, Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung 1, Drittes Buch, §52, pp.356-372, and in the second volume, Drittes Buch, Kapitel 39: "Zur Metaphysik der Musik", pp.573-586.

26. Letter to Rohde, 9.12.68, KGA I,2, No.604.

27. Letter to Rohde. 16.6.1869, KGA II,1, No.8.

28. Letter to Wagner, 22.5.69, KGA II,1, No.4.

29. That education was about liberation, about enabling others to find their own way would later become the predominant theme of the third Unzeitgemäße Betrachtung on Schopenhauer. Much later, in Ecce Homo, Nietzsche explains why Zarathustra is not a seducer, not a "genius", by quoting Zarathustra's preaching to his disciples: "Now I go alone, my disciples, you too, go now, alone. Thus I want it. [etc.]" See Also sprach Zarathustra, Part 1.

30. Letter to Rohde, 8.10.1868, KGA I,2, No.591.

31. Cosima to Nietzsche, 18.1.74, KGA II,2, No.265; Wagner to Nietzsche, early January 1874, KGA II,2, No.256.

32. KGA Werke III,4, pp.367-389. Also Ross, p.395.

33. In a very interesting letter to Köselitz (Peter Gast), Nietzsche would later (1880) reflect on his break with Wagner. "There has never been a bad word between us", he recalls, "not even in my dreams [...], and with nobody else I laughed as much as with him. [...]" It seems so silly to me: the will to be right for the price of love." Letter to Köselitz, 20.8.1880, KGA III,1, No.49.

34. For Nietzsche's interpretation (and generalization) of Wagner's change see Zur Genealogie der Moral, Third Part, No.1-4.

35. Nietzsche himself alluded to this at the end of the first section of the third Unzeitgemäße Betrachtung: "Und so will ich mich denn heute des einen Lehrers und Zuchtmeisters, dessen ich mich zu rühmen habe, eingedenk sein, Arthur Schopenhauers -- um später anderer zu gedenken." (My emphasis.)

36. Letter to Carl von Gersdorff, 26.9.75, KGA II,5, No.487.

37. Letter to Rohde, 7.10.75, KGA II,5, No.490.

38. KGA Werke, IV,2, p.386.

39. That was the time when Nietzsche frequently referred to Longfellow's poem "Excelsior" in his letters. See Ross, pp.444-454,

40. On the following see in particular Ernst Bertrams brilliant chapter "Maske" in Ernst Bertram, Nietzsche -- Versuch einer Mythologie, (Bonn: Bouvier, 1965), pp.167-191.

41. In Nietzsche's birthday letter to Wagner of 1875, he thanks Wagner for the continuous restlessness [Unruhe] which Wagner's person and his work had provoked in Nietzsche. Letter to Wagner, 21.5.75, KGA II,5, No.527.

42. This ideas are already present in Nietzsche's Die dionysische Weltanschauung (1870), in KGA Werke III,2, pp.43-69.

43. Ross, p.469.

44. Nachlass zur Morgenröte, quoted in Bertram p.174.

45. Letter to Elisabeth Nietzsche, 29.12.1879, KGA II,5, No.922.

46. Letter to Carl Burckhardt, 2.5.1879, KGA II,5, No.846.

47. Letter to Malwida von Meysenbug, 14.1.1880, KGA III,1, No.2, Letter to Rée, late January 1880, KGA III,1, No.5.

48. Only shortly before what is considered the end of Nietzsche's conscious life, from October 1888 onwards, did the health problems disappear from his letters. Moreover, he enjoyed presenting himself as healthy -- "ten years younger than allowed". (Letter to Köselitz (Peter Gast), 30.10.1888, KGA III,5, No.1137). In a letter to Overbeck, he regrets that he could not report anything sad or miserable (13.11.88, KGA III,5, No.1143).

49. In a late letter to Georg Brandes, Nietzsche explains that "around 1876" his health deteriorated and that it was only from 1882 onwards that he would slowly recover. 10.4.88, KGA III,5, No.1014.

50. See also Nietzsche's reflections on the importance of his illness for his thinking in Ecce Homo, Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, No.4.

51. Draft letter to Hermann Levi, November 1882, KGA III,1, No.326.

52. Ecce Homo, Warum ich so weise bin, No.2.

53. Letter to Rohde, 5.2.75, KGA II,5, No.422.

54. Postcard to Elisabeth Nietzsche, 20.3.1879, KGA II,5, No.697.

55. Postcard to Elisabeth Nietzsche, 2.4.1879, KGA II,5, No.704.

56. Draft letter to Richard and Cosima Wagner, early 1878, KGA II,5, No.676, and Schmeitzner's letter to Nietzsche, 25.1.1878, KGA II,6/2, No.1031.

57. Letter to Köselitz, 31.5.1878, KGA II,5, No.723.



58. Letter to Overbeck, second half in November 1880, KGA III,1, No.66. Although he would spent so much time in Italy, Nietzsche never managed to properly learn Italian. Even the doctors of clinic at Leipzig would later remark in their reports his inability to correctly use even the simplest Italian words. See Ross, p.790.

59. Postcard to Köselitz (Peter Gast), 22.9.1881, KGA III,1, No.153.

60. In 1887, after his Also sprach Zarathustra, Nietzsche wrote to Overbeck in very beautiful words: "Diese letzten Jahre auszuhalten -- das war vielleicht das Schwerste, was mir überhaupt mein Schicksal bisher zugemuthet hat. Nach einem solchen Ausrufe, wie mein Zarathustra es war, aus der innersten Seele heraus, nicht einen Laut von Antwort zu hören, nichts, nichts, immer nur die lautlose, nunmehr vertausendfachte Einsamkeit - - das hat etwas über alle Begriffe Furchtbares, daran kann der Stärkste zu Grunde gehn - - ach, und ich bin nicht "der Stärkste"!" (17.6.1887, KGA III,5, No.863). Only shortly before the end of his conscious life, in April 1888, did Nietzsche receive a letter from Georg Brandes, informing him that Brandes had begun to lecture on the "tyske filosof" Friedrich Nietzsche. Brandes had heard of Nietzsche's work at first through Lou Salomé. See Ross, p.646.

61. Letter to Gersdorff, 21.7.1875, KGA II,5, No.471.

62. Letter to Marie Baumgartner, 19.7.1875, KGA II,5, No.469; letter to Gersdorff, 19.7.1875, KGA II,5, No.470.

63. Letter to Marie Baumgartner, 2.8.75, KGA II,5, No.475.

64. Letter to Malwida von Meysenbug, 11.8.1875, KGA II,5, No.103.

65. Letter to Gersdorff, 26.9.75, KGA II,5, No.487.

66. See for example, KGA Werke IV,2, p.386.

67. Letter to Overbeck, 5.4.76, KGA II,5, No.515.

68. Letter to Gersdorff, 26.5.1876, KGA II,5, No.529.

69. Letter to Malwida von Meysenbug, 1.7.77, KGA II,5, No.630.

70. Letter to Schmeitzner, 3.12.77, KGA II,5, No.673.

71. Letter to Brandes, 19.2.1888, KGA III,5, No.997.

72. Draft letter to the Wagners, early 1878, KGA II,5, No.676.

73. See No.5 in the preface Nietzsche added in 1886 to the first volume of Menschliches, Allzumenschliches.

74. See also Ecce Homo, Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, No.3.

75. Quoted in Bertram, Nietzsche -- Versuch einer Mythologie, p.175.

76. In some respects, Zarathustra resembles a socratic figure looking for disciples who follow him because they follow themselves. See the passages in Also sprach Zarathustra, First Part, Zarathustras Vorrede, No.9; Die Reden Zarathustras, Von den Verächtern des Leibes; Von der schenkenden Tugend, No.3; Second Part, Von den Tugendhaften; Third Part, Von der Seligkeit wider Willen; Von alten und neuen Tafeln, No.7; Fourth Part, Das Honig- Opfer.

77. KGA Werke IV,2, fragments of 1876, p.391.

78. See section No.1 in this preface.

79. Letter to Brandes, 19.2.88, KGA III,5, No.997.

80. Postcard (fragment) to Schmeitzner, 23.11.1878, KGA II,5, No.774.

81. Letter to Köselitz (Peter Gast), 11.9.1879, KGA II,5, No.880.

82. KGA Werke, V,1, M II 2., p.739; Letters to Köselitz (Peter Gast), 9.2.1881, 22.2.1881, 20.3.1881, KGA III, 1, No.80,83,94; letter to Schmeitzner, 23.2.1881, KGA III,1, No.85; Köselitz' letters to Nietzsche, 10.2.1881, 19.2.1881, KGA III,2, No.57,59.

83. Letter to Köselitz (Peter Gast), 25.1.1882, KGA III,1, No.190. Nietzsche informs his publisher about the new script, now entitled Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft, in his letter of 8.5.1882, KGA III,1, No.224.

84. Letter to Credner, mid January 1886, KGA III,3, No.663; Draft letter to Credner, 27.3.1886, KGA III,3, No.679; Letter to Köselitz (Peter Gast), 27.3.1886, ib. No.680.

85. See letters No.877,880,881,882 in KGA III,5.

86. In his letter to Köselitz (Peter Gast) of 25.1.1882 (KGA III,1, No.190), Nietzsche announces that he was not yet ready for the fundamental ideas of the projected books IX and X of Morgenröte. Among those idea was one, he wrote, that would need millennia to unfold. It seems that the idea of the eternal return at first should have made up a much larger part in what later became Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft. While he was working on the project, he must have decided to design it as a text of its own and, in particular, in a specific form. See also sections no.37.-40. below.

87. Letter to Köselitz (Peter Gast), 6.1.1888, KGA III,5, No.973.

88. Letter to Köselitz (Peter Gast), 13.2.88, KGA III,5, No.991.

89. Schopenhauer, Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung 2, p.489.

90. KGA Werke V,1, fragments of late 1880, 7[105], p.669.

91. Letter to Köselitz (Peter Gast), 18.12.1881, KGA III,1, No.180. The German word in the text for "experiences" is "Erlebnisse"; and for "thoughts" it is "Gedanken".



92. Letter to Köselitz (Peter Gast), 14.8.1881, KGA III,1, No.136. This letter must have been written at the time when Nietzsche was developing the idea of the eternal return. Most likely, his enthusiasm, his tears, are related to this idea.

93. Nietzsche suggested the addition of prefaces to his new publisher, Fritzsche (who in fact was also his first publisher), in his letter of 7.8.1886, KGA III,3, No.730. See also his letter to Fritzsche of 29.8.1886, KGA III,3, No.740.

94. Letter to Brandes, 2.12.1887, KGA III,5, No.960.

95. Letter to Fritzsche, 7.8.1886, KGA III,3, No.730.

96. Preface to Morgenröte, No.4. See also Ecce Homo, Warum ich ein Schicksal bin, No.3.

97. Zur Genealogie der Moral, Third Part. No.27.

98. Ecce Homo, Warum ich ein Schicksal bin, No.1.

99. Letter to Köselitz (Peter Gast), 18.7.1880, KGA III,1, No.40.

100. Letter to Overbeck, second half of November 1880, KGA III,1, No.66.

101. Letter to Schmeitzner, 23.2.1881, KGA III,1, No.85; postcard to Franziska and Elisabeth Nietzsche, 11.6.1881, KGA III,1, No.114.

102. Both quotes are from Nietzsche's preface (1886) to the second volume of Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, No.1. The German text of the first quote is: "Aber es bedurfte immer erst der Zeit, der Genesung, der Ferne, der Distanz, bis die Lust sich bei mir regte, etwas Erlebtes und Überlebtes, irgend ein Factum oder Fatum nachträglich für die Erkenntnis abzuhäuten, auszubeuten, bloßzulegen, "darzustellen" (oder wie man's heißen will)."

103. See section no.26 and (e.g.) his preface to Zur Genealogie der Moral, No.1.

104. KGA Werke V,1, fragments of late 1880, 7[200], p.688. See also his letter to Overbeck, 31.10.1880, KGA III,1, No.58.

105. Letter to Köselitz, 22.2.1881, KGA III,1, No.83; very explicit in his letter to Overbeck where he announces the new book, 18.3.1881, KGA III,1, No.92; letter to Rohde, 24.3.1881, KGA III,1, No.96; letter to Elisabeth Nietzsche, 19.6.1881, KGA III,1, No.116.

106. See e.g. Ecce Homo, Also sprach Zarathustra, No.5.

107. Letter to Köselitz (Peter Gast), 1.2.1883, KGA III,1, No.370.

108. Letter to Gersdorff, 20.12.1887, KGA III,5, No.965.

109. Letter to Brandes, 8.1.88, KGA III,5, No.974.

110. Letter to Brandes, 2.12.1887, KGA III,5, No.960.

111. Der Fall Wagner, No.8.
112. See e.g. the preface (1886) to Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft, No.4.
113. Explicitly in Ecce Homo, Warum ich ein Schicksal bin, No.3.
114. Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft, Fourth Book, No.342; also Also sprach Zarathustra, First Part (Zarathustras Vorrede), No.1.
115. For a discussion see Mazzino Montinari, *Zarathustra vor Also sprach Zarathustra*, in Montinari, Nietzsche lesen, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1982), pp.79-91. See also Nietzsche's remarks in KGA Werke III,3, 5[54], p.110.
116. KGA Werke V,2, 11[195-197], pp.417-418.
117. KGA Werke V,2, 11[141], p.392. The idea that there could be some circularity "in the culture of mankind" must have been present in his thinking long before the eternal return. Already in a note from late 1880, he reflected "The big question: whether there is some circularity in the culture of mankind, small and bigger? We in the first [circle]?". KGA V,1 7[264], p.702.
118. For Nietzsche's "proofs" and early comments on the eternal return see KGA V,1 11[141], p.392; 11[148], p.396; 11[152], p.398; 11[157], p.400; 11[158-159,161], p.401; 11[163], p.402-3; 11[195-197], p.417-418; 11[202-203], p.421-422; 11[213], p.423; 11[231-233], p.428; 11[245], p.432; 11[265], p.441; 11[269], p.442; 11[292], p.451; 11[311-313], p.458-460.
119. KGA Werke V,2, 11[203], p.421; 11[240], p.430; and later in KGA Werke VII,1, 24[4] p.687; KGA Werke VII,2, Summer-Fall 1884, 26[284], p.223.
120. This question is posed already in the very first note on the eternal return. See KGA Werke V,2, 11[141], p.392.
121. KGA Werke VII,2, 25[405], p.114.
122. KGA Werke V,2, 11[338], p.471; KGA Werke VII,1, 24[7], p.688; KGA Werke VII,2, 25[227], p.69; KGA Werke VII,2, 25[290], p.290.
123. KGA Werke VII,2, 25[5], p.6; 25[323], p.91.
124. KGA Werke VII,2, 26[298], p.227.
125. KGA Werke V,2, 11[166], p.403.
126. KGA Werke VII,2, Spring 1884, 25[7], p.7. My emphasis. In the final version of this passage in Also sprach Zarathustra, Third Part, Der Genesende, No.2, Nietzsche takes over the formulation "ewig wieder zu diesem gleichen und selbigen Leben".
127. Ecce Homo, Also sprach Zarathustra, No.3.
128. Letter to Malwida von Meysenbug, late March 1884, KGA III,1, No.498.



129. Letter to Malwida von Meysenbug, first week of June 1884, KGA III,1, No.516.
130. Also sprach Zarathustra, Third Part, Vom Gesicht und Rätsel, No.2; Der Genesende, No.2.
131. Third Part, Das Tanzlied, No.2.
132. In private, Nietzsche explained this scene e.g. to Resa von Schirnhofer, a friend of Malwida von Meysenbug, while she visited him in Sils-Maria in the spring of 1884. See Ross, Der ängstliche Adler, p.679.
133. Nietzsche on Zarathustra in Ecce Homo, Also sprach Zarathustra, No.6.
134. Letter to Burckhardt, 6.1.1889, KGA III,5, No.1256.
135. See also his remark made in the context of his first notebook entry which links Zarathustra and the eternal return: "The incessant transformation -- you must go through many individuals in a short time. The means is the incessant struggle." (KGA Werke V,2, 11[197], p.418)
136. Jenseits von Gut und Böse, Was ist vornehm?, No.270.
137. Ecce Homo, Warum ich so klug bin, No.4.
138. Morgenröte, No.14: Bedeutung des Wahnsinns in der Geschichte der Moralität.
139. Also sprach Zarathustra, First Part, Die Reden Zarathustras, Von den drei Verwandlungen.
140. See Ross, Der ängstliche Adler, p.796. On the three metamorphoses see Erich Heller, Zarathustra's three metamorphoses: Facets of Nietzsche's intellectual biography and the apotheosis of innocence, in Heller, The Importance of Nietzsche, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), pp.70-86. Neither of the two authors sees this connection. Ross describes Nietzsche's regression to childhood; Heller criticizes that Nietzsche (or Zarathustra) did not go beyond the stage of the lion.
141. Quoted in Ross, p.702.
142. See for example the final verse of his poem "Nur Narr! Nur Dichter!" from the Dionysos-Dithyramben: "Bei abgehellter Luft,/ wenn schon des Monds Sichel/ grün zwischen Purpurröten/ und neidisch hinschleicht,/ - dem Tage feind,/ mit jedem Schritte heimlich/ an Rosen-Hängematten/ hinsichelnd, bis sie sinken,/ nachtabwärts blaß hinabsinken:/ so sank ich selber einstmals/ aus meinem Wahrheits-Wahnsinne,/ aus meinen Tages-Sehnsüchten,/ des Tages müde, krank vom Lichte,/ - sank abwärts, abendwärts, schattenwärts,/ von einer Wahrheit/ verbrannt und durstig/ - gedenkst du noch, gedenkst du, heißes Herz,/ wie da du durstetest? -/ daß ich verbrannt sei/ von aller Wahrheit!! Nur Narr! Nur Dichter!"
143. Histoire de la Sexualité 1: La volonté de savoir, (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1976); dt. Sexualität und Wahrheit Bd.1: Der Wille zum Wissen, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp stw, 6th ed. 1992).

144. Didier Eribon, Michel Foucault 1926-1984, translated by Betsy Wing, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp.273-274.

145. Eribon, p.277.

146. Eribon, p.321.

147. See the beginning of his lecture given on January 7, 1976, (in the following referred to as Lecture One), which also opened the course of 76, in Colin Gordon (ed.), Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & other Writings by Michel Foucault, 1972-1977, (New York: Pantheon, 1981), pp.78-92 (78-79).

148. Foucault, by 1976 already a celebrity, must have felt that his work did not provoke the reactions he had wanted to see. At that time, he saw his work "surrounded by a prudent silence" and interpreted this silence as a failure on his part. See Lecture One, 7.1.1976, p.87. In the context of Naissance de la Clinique, too, Foucault was struck that "the question [he] was posing totally failed to interest those to whom [he] addressed it." See Truth and Power, in Power/Knowledge, pp.109-133 (109-111). This interview was first published in 1977.

149. For his problems see e.g. Questions of Method, in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, Peter Miller (eds.), The Foucault Effect -- Studies in Governmentality, (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp.73-86 (74). This text is based on a round-table debate with Michel Foucault in May 1978. Before its publication in 1980, the text was extensively recast by Foucault. In contrast to his statements in Questions of Method, see his later remarks in Critical Theory/Intellectual History, in Lawrence D. Kritzman (ed.), Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture -- Interviews and other writings 1977-1984, (London: Routledge, 1988), pp.17-46 (33,36). In the following I will refer to this interview as the "Telos-interview", as it was first published in Telos in 1983. See also Politics and Ethics, in Paul Rabinow (ed.), The Foucault Reader, (New York: Pantheon, 1984), pp.373-380 (374), an edited version of an interview with Michel Foucault conducted in April 1983. In his last interview, Foucault even considered his early books, Histoire de la Folie, Les Mots et les Choses, Surveiller et Punir, as philosophical studies even if of a specific kind. See Die Rückkehr zur Moral, in Eva Erdmann, Rainer Forst, Axel Honneth (eds.), Ethos der Moderne: Foucault's Kritik der Aufklärung, (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1990), pp.133-145 (133); an English translation of this interview is in the volume edited by Kritzman. Interestingly, before and up to 1976, Foucault did not seem to have problems with the label "philosopher". He considered everyone who was concerned with questions such as "What is knowledge?", "What is truth?" to be a philosopher, including himself. See Questions on Geography (1976), in Power/Knowledge, pp.63-77 (66).

150. See e.g. Nietzsche's angry response to Paul Deussen, who had congratulated him to his chair at Bâle University in such "infinitely unimportant and trivial manner" that Nietzsche threatened to end the friendship. KGA I,2, No.622,623. For Foucault see Eribon, pp.16,25-26,292-293.

151. Ross, Der ängstliche Adler, pp.86-113, on Nietzsche and Eribon, pp.138,141, on Foucault.

152. Eribon, p.27.



153. Nietzsche emphasized that it was the way in which Brandes dealt with his texts (in addition to the fact that Brandes read him and lectured on his writings) that gave him the feeling that he had been, to some extent, understood. See Nietzsche's letter to Fritzsche, 14.2.1888, KGA III,5, No.993. On the importance of the exchange with Dreyfus and Rabinow for Foucault, see Foucault's remarks in e.g. Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault (October 1982), in Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, Patrick H. Hutton (eds.), Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault, (London: Tavistock, 1988), pp.9-15 (12); also The Use of Pleasures, (New York: Vintage, 1990), p.8.

154. Didier Eribon, Michel Foucault. Eribon had worked with Foucault before and had conducted interviews with him. For a very American account of Foucault's life and work see now James Miller, The Passion of Michel Foucault, (New York: Simon&Schuster, 1993).

155. Eribon, p.156.

156. Die Archäologie des Wissens, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 4th ed. 1990), p.29. The entire book is a response to the reactions provoked by his earlier books.

157. Eribon, pp.324-327. For more speculations on how Foucault reacted to AIDS in general and the possibility of himself being infected see Miller, pp.13-36.

158. I maintain this distinction between Foucault's project and its end and between Nietzsche's projects and its end also after having read James Miller's book The Passion of Michel Foucault.

159. Eribon, p.52, Telos-Interview, p.23.

160. Eribon, p.70, Telos-Interview, p.23.

161. Die Rückkehr zur Moral, p.140-141; Telos-Interview, p.23.

162. Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault, p.13.

163. Telos-Interview, p.23,32; Miller, pp.66-72.

164. Telos-Interview, p.24.

165. Intended preface to The Use of Pleasures, in Foucault-Reader, pp.333-339 (336). There are other statements by Foucault which contradict this one. At one point he even seemed to imply that the reading of Nietzsche made him join the Communist Party. See Eribon, p.52. If one looks at the dates, however, this version appears as unlikely at it sounds.

166. Telos-Interview, p.33.

167. The Minimalist Self (first published in 1983), in Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture, pp.3-16 (8).

168. See especially Die Ordnung der Dinge, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp stw, 10th ed. 1991), p.460.

169. Madness and Civilization, (London: Tavistock, 3rd printing 1985 (first 1971)), especially pp.279-289 with explicit references to Nietzsche's madness as a research topic.

170. Eribon, p.62-64.

171. Prison Talk (first published in 1975), in Power/Knowledge, pp.37-54 (53-54).

172. Die Rückkehr zur Moral, p.141.

173. Folie et Déraison, (Paris: Plon, 1961), preface p.ix. For the second edition, Foucault prepared an entirely new preface.

174. Practising Criticism (1981), in Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture, pp.152-156 (156).

175. Minimalist Self, p.7.

176. Eribon, p.27.

177. The irony of this is all too obvious: the one who wanted to be the creator of values which would guide mankind into a presumably better future had to print some of his books at his own expense as his words were sent, at least during much of his lifetime, into a frightening void. The one whose efforts were directed mostly towards himself, sold e.g. 32500 copies of Les Mots et les Choses during the first two years after its publication. For the success of Foucault's book see Eribon, p.156.

178. Archäologie des Wissens, p.30.

179. This is one of the two meanings of the term "subject" he delineated in The Subject and Power, published as afterword to Hubert L. Dreyfus, Paul Rabinow, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, (Brighton: Harvester, 1982), pp.208-226 (212).

180. Minimalist Self, p.14; The Use of Pleasures, Preface, p.8.

181. Interview with Michel Foucault, Bonniers Literära Magasin, Stockholm, March 1968, p.204, mentioned in Eribon on p.92.

182. Politics and the Study of Discourse (first published in French in 1968), in The Foucault-Effect, pp.53-72 (71-72); Archäologie des Wissens, pp.300-301; What is an Author? (1971), in Foucault-Reader, pp.101-120.

183. Archäologie des Wissens, p.296.

184. Quoted in Eribon, p.237. On Foucault's preoccupation with death see Miller, The Passion of Michel Foucault, especially pp.54-57 on the suicide attempts around 1948.

185. (Auto-)biography, in History of the Present, Spring 1988, No.4, pp.14-15. This text was written in the early 80s; it grew out of Foucault's attempt to write a preface to the very first version of Les Aveux de la Chair.



186. E.g. Politics and the Study of Discourse, pp.54,62; Archäologie des Wissens, pp.292-293; Questions of Method, pp.78,85; Telos-Interview, p.36; Politics and Ethics, pp.375-376; An Aesthetics of Existence (1984), in Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture, pp.47-53 (50).

187. See e.g. Questions on Geography, p.74. In his lecture of January 14, 1976, (in the following referred to as Lecture Two), Foucault emphasized that even the individual cannot be accepted as a pre-given entity. See Lecture Two, in Power/Knowledge, pp.92-108 (98). Related and more general statements also later in The Ethics of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom (1984), in James Bernauer, David Rasmussen (eds.), The Final Foucault, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), pp.1-20 (9-10); The Concern for Truth (published in 1984), in Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture, pp.255-267 (257).

188. This formulation in the intended preface to The Use of Pleasures, p.335.

189. In this line is also the non-preface he wrote for the second edition of Folie et Dérailson, now entitled Histoire de la Folie à l'âge classique. (The former subtitle now became the main title.)

190. Questions of Method, p.73-74.

191. Politics and Ethics, p.374.

192. Ordnung der Dinge, p.12.

193. Preface to the German edition (1977) of La Volonté de Savoir, p.7.

194. Quoted in Eribon, p.295.

195. This version in The Concern for Truth, p.256.

196. See the preface to the first edition of Folie et Dérailson; Politics and the Study of Discourse, pp.59-60; Archäologie des Wissens, p.27. One may also try to relate Foucault's problems to "give [himself] and others those middle-range pleasures that make up everyday life" to this theme. See The Minimalist Self, pp.12-13.

197. Madness and Civilization, p.xii.

198. This even in an interview of the early 80s: Telos-Interview, p.30.

199. Histoire de la Folie (Paris: Gallimard, 2nd ed. (of Folie et Dérailson) 1972), p.557.

200. Preface to Folie et Dérailson, p.ix.

201. Die Ordnung der Dinge, p.451.

202. Ordnung der Dinge, p.17.

203. Die Ordnung der Dinge, pp.22-24.

204. See Foucault's ingenious discussion of the painting in Die Ordnung der Dinge, chapter 1.
205. Die Ordnung der Dinge, chapter 9,II, pp.372 and following.
206. See also Hinrich Fink-Eitel, Foucault -- Zur Einführung, (Hamburg: Junius/SOAK, 1989), p.42.
207. Ordnung der Dinge, preface, pp.26-27; chapter 10,VI, p.462.
208. Introduction to The Use of Pleasures, p.8.
209. Politics and the Study of Discourse, p.61.
210. See for example pp.28-29 in the German translation.
211. Preface to the German edition, pp.10,14.
212. Eribon, pp.209,238.
213. See e.g. Discipline and Punish, (London: Penguin, 1977), Part 4,1., on how the prison produces delinquency.
214. See e.g. Body/Power (1975), in Power/Knowledge, pp.55-62 (61); Questions on Geography, p.74.
215. For self-critical statements along those lines see e.g. An Aesthetics of Existence, pp.47-48; The Concern for Truth, pp.255-256; Die Rückkehr zur Moral, pp.133, 142-143.
216. Der Wille zum Wissen, p.117.
217. Der Wille zum Wissen, pp.59-61.
218. Der Wille zum Wissen, pp.15-16.
219. Der Wille zum Wissen, p.187.
220. For some examples which I marked while reading the book see pp.70,72 (over-confidence, bluntness), 81-84 (adjectives), 101 (Foucault is aware of his repetitiveness). Apparently, Foucault soon learned that his proposed scheme of analysis could be misunderstood as emptiness. See the preface to the German edition (1977) of La Volonté de Savoir, p.8.
221. Questions of Method, p.77; Politics and the Study of Discourse, p.58.
222. Interview in La Quinzaine littéraire, April 15, 1966; mentioned in Eribon, p.161.
223. Eribon, p.214.
224. The Confession of the Flesh (1977), in Power/Knowledge, pp.194-228 (207).



225. See e.g. Power and Strategies (1977), in Power/Knowledge, pp.134-145 (140); The Confession of the Flesh, p.201.
226. Power and Strategies, pp.139-140.
227. Truth and Power, pp.118-119.
228. See The History of Sexuality, an interview first published in early 1977, now in Power/Knowledge, pp.183-193 (183-184).
229. Power and Strategies, pp.139-140.
230. Lecture Two, pp.95-96,103-108.
231. Truth and Power, p.119.
232. The Confession of the Flesh, pp.198-199.
233. The Eye of Power (first published in 1977), in Power/Knowledge, pp.146-165 (156).
234. Power and Strategies, pp.141-142.
235. The presentation of the sexuality-project as a study in the theory of power is from The History of Sexuality, p.187; 'sexuality' as a positive product of power is mentioned in Truth and Power, pp.120-121.
236. Prison Talk, p.52.
237. Lecture Two, 14.1.1976, pp.97-98.
238. Truth and Power, p.119.
239. Lecture Two, p.93; also Truth and Power, p.133.
240. Truth and Power, p.131.
241. Lecture Two, p.94.
242. Truth and Power, p.133.
243. Power and Strategies, p.142.
244. Truth and Power, p.123.
245. Lecture Two, p.108.
246. The History of Sexuality, p.190.
247. Lecture One, p.81.
248. The History of Sexuality, p.189.

249. See also Miller, p.299, on the pain and suffering witnesses noticed in Foucault's struggle with his lectures.

250. "Sécurité, territoire et population" is the title of his course in 1978. An edited version of the course exists (translated into German) as "Vorlesungen zur Analyse der Macht-Mechanismen 1978: Das Denken des Staates" in Michel Foucault, Der Staub und die Wolke, (Bremen: Verlag Impuls, 1982), pp.1-44. Foucault's résumés des cours, summaries of his lectures, were published as Michel Foucault, Résumé des cours 1970-1982, (Paris: Julliard, 1989).

251. Der Wille zum Wissen, p.167.

252. The course title of 1979 was indeed "Naissance de la biopolitique". See Résumé, pp.107-120. In April 1983, Foucault still thought that a "genealogy of bio-power" could be done and that, in fact, he *had to* do it. But he acknowledged: "I have no time for that now." See On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress (1983), in Foucault Reader, pp.340-372 (344).

253. The "governmentality" lecture was published as an Italian transcript already in 1978; an English version appeared in 1979. An English translation of the Italian transcript is also printed in the Foucault Effect, pp.87-104.

254. This is the note on which the Tanner lectures, held on October 10 and 16, 1979, end. See Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture, pp.57-85 (84-85).

255. See Questions of Method, p.82. In the 2nd Tanner lecture (p.71), Foucault refers to the pastoral as a form of "government of individuals by their own verity".

256. From Arpad Scacolczai's seminar at the European University Institute, 1991/92.

257. "Perhaps I've insisted too much on the technology of domination and power. I am more and more interested in the interaction between oneself and others and in the technologies of individual domination, the history of how an individual acts upon himself, in the technology of self", from Technologies of the Self (from a seminar Foucault gave at the University of Vermont in the fall of 1982; Foucault died before he could complete the revision of his seminar presentations), in Technologies of the Self, pp.16-49 (19); for the new emphasis on the techniques of the self see also Michel Foucault, Richard Sennett, Sexuality and Solitude, London Review of Books, 21 May - 3 June 1981, pp.3-7 (5).

258. See Michel Foucault's Hermeneutik des Subjekts (an abridged presentation of Foucault's lectures at the Collège in 1982), in Helmut Becker, Lothar Wolfstetter (eds.), Freiheit und Selbstsorge, (Frankfurt a.M.: Materialis, 1985), pp.32-60 (55); The Subject and Power, p.208; (Auto-)Biography, p.14; Polemics, Politics, and Problematization (1984), in Foucault Reader, pp.381-390 (386-387). The classification of the single works also changed here and then. For example, Foucault later indicated that in Folie et Dérailson, all categories were present "albeit in a somewhat confused fashion." See Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress, pp.351-352; and his intended preface to L'Usage des Plaisirs, pp.366-367.



259. Polemics, Politics, Problematization, pp.387-388.
260. An Aesthetics of Existence, pp.47-48.
261. Die Rückkehr zur Moral, pp.142-143; The Concern for Truth, pp.255-256.
262. Die Rückkehr zur Moral, pp.142; advertising insert distributed with the volumes two and three of the History of Sexuality, mentioned in Eribon, p.320.
263. From Arpad Scacolczai's seminar.
264. An important operator in this time travel was Foucault's discovery that the Elephant metaphor, which presents the life of elephants as ideal models for an adequate family life, was in fact not invented by christians but can be traced back even to Hellenistic literature. See Sexuality and Solitude, p.5.
265. Overview of Work in Progress, pp.341,361.
266. Overview of Work in Progress, p.366; An Aesthetics of Existence, p.48.
267. The Concern for Truth, pp.259-260; Die Hermeneutik des Subjekts; also Technologies of the Self. From a series of lectures Foucault gave in the fall of 1980 in the US, the ones he gave at Dartmouth College have recently been published in About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two Lectures at Dartmouth, Political Theory, Vol.21, No.2 (May 1993), pp.198-227; they present an early overview of Foucault's arguments.
268. An Overview of Work in Progress, pp.341-342. Foucault also mentioned that he had "more than a draft" of a book about sexual ethics in the 16th century, "in which also the problem of the techniques of the self, self-examination, the cure of souls, is very important." (p.342) This draft might have been based on the second book he began to write according to his plan of 1976; the other one consisting of material that would evolve into Les Aveux de la Chair.
269. Eribon, p.319.
270. Die Hermeneutik des Subjekts, pp.34,47; Die Rückkehr der Moral, p.144; also (Auto)Biography, p.15.
271. Die Rückkehr zur Moral, p.133.
272. Overview of Work in Progress, p.369.
273. The Concern for Truth, p.256.
274. Use of Pleasures, Modifications and Introduction, p.7.
275. Ethics of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom, p.2.
276. The Subject and Power, pp.208-209.

277. The Subject and Power, pp.222-223.
278. The Subject and Power, p.221.
279. Subject and Power, p.225; words to that extent also in The Ethics of the Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom, pp.12-13.
280. The Ethics of Care for the Self, pp.3-4.
281. Basically, I am claiming here precisely the opposite of Hinrich Fink-Eitel, Foucault - Zur Einführung, pp.79-95.
282. Hermeneutik des Subjekts, p.54.
283. Ethics of the Care for the Self, p.18.
284. Telos-Interview, pp.38-39.
285. Ethics of the Care for the Self, p.10.
286. Politics and Ethics, p.375; Polemics, Politics, Problematizations, pp.383-384.
287. Overview of Work in Progress, p.348. The quotation may be somewhat misleading in that Foucault in his writings usually clearly indicated that he did not consider self-relations as a sphere that would exist independently of other power-relations or games of truth.
288. Foucault must have become aware of the specificity of self-relations at the latest while working on the preface of the first version of Les Aveux de la Chair. The text later evolved into his short (Auto-)Biography. A first glimpse at the potential theoretical implications made a premature publication impossible.
289. Introduction to The Use of Pleasures, p.11.
290. The Ethics of Care for the Self, p.15. Foucault refers in these remarks to the Western world.
291. The Concern for Truth, p.267; The Ethics of Care for the Self, p.17.
292. The masked Philosopher (1980), in Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture, pp.323-330 (324).
293. The Concern for Truth, pp.263-264.
294. This even in the Subject and Power text of 1982, p.216.
295. See Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault, p.15.
296. The evolution of the various meanings of "parrhesia" was the topic of Foucault's seminar at Berkeley in the fall of 1983. Joseph Pearson prepared a (privately printed)



transcription of Foucault's presentation: Discourse and Truth: The Problematization of Parrhesia.

297. Discourse and Truth, p.2.

298. Foucault lectured on parrhesia also at the Collège de France. A German translation of two of those lectures of 1983/84 was edited by Ulrike Reuter, Lothar Wolfstetter, Hermann Kocyba, Bernd Heiter as Michel Foucault: Das Wahrsprechen des Anderen, (Frankfurt a.M.: Materialis Verlag, 1988), pp.15-42. On Dion and Plato see pp.21-24.

299. Das Wahrsprechen des Anderen, p.35.

300. Das Wahrsprechen des Anderen, p.19.

301. From Plato, Laches, quoted in Discourse and Truth, p.61.

302. Discourse and Truth, pp.11,68.

303. Discourse and Truth, p.69.

304. Foucault's interpretation of Socrates' last words was inspired by Georges Dumézil. See Georges Dumézil, "... Le Moyne noir en gris dedans varennnes". Sotie nostradamique suivie d'un Divertissement sur les dernière paroles de Socrate, (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), pp.129-170. James Miller in The Passion of Michel Foucault, p.359, evidently did not properly understand this interpretation. Foucault's last lectures dealt with the cynic Diogenes, who is said to have considered himself "a Socrates gone mad".

305. See sections 61.-62.

306. Foucault later gave the text to Paul Rabinow for his Foucault-Reader. According to Arpad Scakolczai, the text was prepared in 1982. In the text, the universality of thought is captured in the "principle of irreducibility of thought", the self-reference in the "principle of singularity of the historicity of thought. See Intended Preface, p.335.

307. Hubert L. Dreyfus, Paul Rabinow, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

308. Die Ordnung der Dinge, pp.22-23.

309. Introduction to The Use of Pleasures, p.11.

310. The concluding remarks of the lectures on parrhesia at Berkeley are perhaps the first occasion where Foucault refers to "problematization" as "his" method. They were published as On Problematization, in History of the Present, Spring 1988. For self-critical comments on his omission to sufficiently isolate this notion see The Concern for Truth, p.257.

311. The Concern for Truth, p.257.

312. Polemics, Politics and Problematization, pp.388-389.

313. In his introduction to The Use of Pleasures, p.12, Foucault repeats the by then already taken-for-granted categorization of his books now in terms of the different types of problematizations they covered.
314. Polemics, Politics, and Problematization, p.388.
315. The Ethics of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom; Overview of Work in Progress, p.346,349.
316. Overview of Work in Progress, p.346. Comments along the same line also in *Die Rückkehr zur Moral*, p.135,139.
317. The Ethics of Care for the Self, p.19.
318. Overview of Work in Progress, p.343.
319. The Concern for Truth, p.263; see also *An Aesthetics of Existence*, p.49.
320. Polemics, Politics, and Problematization, p.384.
321. *Die Rückkehr zur Moral*, p.141.
322. *Die Rückkehr zur Moral*, p.133; The Use of Pleasures: Modifications and Introduction, p.11.
323. Foucault's preoccupation with this text of Kant goes back to at least 1978, when he delivered a lecture entitled "Qu'est-ce que la critique?" to the Société française de philosophie on May 27. For a transcription see the Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie, Vol.84, No.2 (April-June 1990), pp.35-63.
324. Michel Foucault, What is Enlightenment?, in the Foucault-Reader, pp.32-50 (38).
325. Michel Foucault, Kant on Enlightenment and Revolution, a translation by Colin Gordon of "Un cours inédit", Magazine littéraire, No.207, May 1984, pp.35-39. The text is an excerpt, revised by Foucault, from the first lecture in Foucault's 1983 course at the Collège de France. The English translation was published in *Economy and Society*, Vol.15, No.1 (February 1986), pp.88-96 (89).
326. What is Enlightenment?, pp.39-42.
327. What is Enlightenment?, p.45.
328. What is Enlightenment?, p.43. The words "contemporary limits of the necessary" are written in inverted commas also in Foucault's text.
329. What is Enlightenment?, pp.47,50.
330. What is Enlightenment?, p.46.
331. Kant on Enlightenment and Revolution, p.95.



332. "Biographie, Attitüden, Zettelkasten", interview with Niklas Luhmann, conducted by Rainer Erd, Andrea Maihofer, in Dirk Baecker, Georg Stanitzek (eds.), Niklas Luhmann - Archimedes und wir, (Berlin: Merve, 1987), pp.125-155 (145-146); a shortened version of the interview appeared first in the Frankfurter Rundschau, 27.4.1985, p.ZB3, under the title "Der Zettelkasten kostet mich mehr Zeit als das Bücherschreiben".

333. A complete bibliography of Luhmann's writings until 1987 lists 264 entries. See Dirk Baecker, Jürgen Markowitz, Rudolf Stichweh, Hartmann Tyrell, Helmut Wilke (eds.), Theorie als Passion, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1987), pp.720-737.

334. I will come back to the relationship between Foucault and Luhmann in sections 133.-135. in chapter Five.

335. For a discussion of the extent to which Luhmann departed from the theory design of Parsons, see also Gábor Kiss, Grundzüge und Entwicklung der Luhmannschen Systemtheorie, (Stuttgart: Enke, 2nd ed. 1990).

336. After the death of Sartre, Foucault revealed that Sartre had been the one he always wanted to free himself from. See Eribon, p.280. Perhaps, one might speculate (as it would only be: speculation) on the relation between Luhmann and Parsons in similar terms.

337. "Biographie, Attitüden, Zettelkasten", p.132.

338. Luhmann publicly revealed the secrets of his "Zettelkasten" for the first time in Niklas Luhmann, Kommunikation mit Zettelkästen -- Ein Erfahrungsbericht, in Horst Baier, Hans Mathias Kepplinger, Kurt Reumann (eds.), Öffentliche Meinung und sozialer Wandel, (Essays in honour of Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann), (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1981), pp.222-228.

339. For more information on Luhmann's "Zettelkasten" see also "Biographie, Attitüden, Zettelkasten", pp.132,142-145.

340. Niklas Luhmann, Funktionen und Folgen formaler Organisation, (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1964). There was an earlier book published in 1963, entitled Verwaltungsfehler und Vertrauensschutz: Möglichkeiten gesetzlicher Regelung der Rücknehmbarkeit von Verwaltungsakten, (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1963), which he prepared together with Franz Becker.

341. "Biographie, Attitüden, Zettelkasten", pp.132-133.

342. "Biographie, Attitüden, Zettelkasten", pp.134-135; also "Die Selbstbeobachtung des Systems -- Ein Gespräch mit dem Soziologen Niklas Luhmann", interview conducted by Ingeborg Breuer, in Frankfurter Rundschau, 5.12.1992, p.ZB2.

343. "Biographie, Attitüden, Zettelkasten", p.131.

344. Interview with Niklas Luhmann, conducted by Heidemarie Renk, Margaretha Sudhof on 22.12.1989, transmitted by the Hessischer Rundfunk on 11.2.1990.

345. This is how Luhmann later, in 1985, presented the origin of his project in "Vom menschlichen Leben", interview with Niklas Luhmann, conducted by Marilena Camarda, Alessandro Ferrara, Giuseppe Sciortino, Alberto Tulumello, in Dirk Baecker, Georg Stanitzek, Niklas Luhmann -- Archimedes und wir, pp.38-57 (48), first published in Italian as "Intervista a Niklas Luhmann", Segno 10, 1985, No.4-5 (48-49), pp.25-33.

346. See e.g. Soziologie als Theorie sozialer Systeme (1967), in Soziologische Aufklärung 1: Aufsätze zur Theorie sozialer Systeme, (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 4th ed. 1974), pp.113-136 (113-114); also Moderne Systemtheorien als Form gesamtgesellschaftlicher Analyse, Lecture held at the 16. Deutscher Soziologentag, Frankfurt 1968, in Jürgen Habermas, Niklas Luhmann, Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie -- Was leistet die Systemforschung?, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1971), pp.7-24 (14). Luhmann's critique of Parsons may be compared to Norbert Elias' assessment of Parsons' theory and the state of sociology as he describes it in the introduction to the second edition of Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp stw, 16th ed. 1991), pp.VII-LXX.

347. See Niklas Luhmann, Der Funktionsbegriff in der Verwaltungswissenschaft, Verwaltungsarchiv, Vol.49, No.2, April 1958, pp.97-105, especially pp.98-100.

348. Funktion und Kausalität (1962), in Soziologische Aufklärung 1, pp.9-30 (13-14).

349. A crucial text for the following is the 1962 article "Funktion und Kausalität" which summarizes how the transformation of functions into problems amounts to an exit from causal science. See *ib.*, (e.g.) pp.17-18.

350. See e.g. Funktionale Methode und Systemtheorie (1964), in Soziologische Aufklärung 1, pp.31-53 (31-34).

351. Funktion und Kausalität, pp.15,26.

352. This formulation in Niklas Luhmann, Vertrauen (1968), (Stuttgart: Enke, 3rd ed. 1973), p.2.

353. Funktionale Methode und Systemtheorie, pp.44-45.

354. See also the pregnant formulations in Niklas Luhmann, Funktionen und Folgen formaler Organisation, pp.395-397.

355. Funktionale Methode und Systemtheorie, p.47.

356. Funktion und Kausalität, p.27.

357. Programmatic: Funktionale Methode und Systemtheorie.

358. See Systemtheoretische Argumentationen: Eine Entgegnung auf Jürgen Habermas, in Habermas, Luhmann, Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie -- Was leistet die Systemforschung?, pp.291-405 (379-380).

359. On this section see e.g. Funktionen und Folgen formaler Organisation, pp.23-24; Funktionale Methode und Systemtheorie, pp.39-41.



360. Funktionale Methode und Systemtheorie, pp.39-40.
361. Die Praxis der Theorie (1969), in Soziologische Aufklärung 1, pp.253-267 (261).
362. Funktionale Methode und Systemtheorie, pp.33-35.
363. A revised version of the lecture was published in *Soziale Welt*, Vol.18 (1967), pp.97-123, and then later in Soziologische Aufklärung 1, pp.66-91.
364. A term Luhmann picks up from Kenneth Burke, Permanence and Change, (New York: New Republic, 1935), pp.95 and following; see *Soziologische Aufklärung*, p.68.
365. *Soziologische Aufklärung*, p.68.
366. For this move see *Reflexive Mechanismen* (1966), in Soziologische Aufklärung 1, pp.92-112 (105); *Soziologie als Theorie sozialer Systeme*, p.115; *Soziologische Aufklärung*, pp.71,74,80-81; Zweckbegriff und Systemrationalität (1968), (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp stw, 2nd ed. 1977), pp.346-349; Vertrauen, p.3; *Die Praxis der Theorie*, pp.253,256,262,264.
367. Vertrauen, p.5.
368. *Soziologie als Theorie sozialer Systeme*, p.116.
369. See e.g. *Moderne Systemtheorien als Form gesamtgesellschaftlicher Analyse*, pp.11,15-16,19.
370. *Die Praxis der Theorie*, p.261.
371. See *Systemtheoretische Argumentationen: Eine Entgegnung auf Jürgen Habermas*, p.295; see also the self-critical remarks in the preface (1969) to the first edition of Soziologische Aufklärung 1, p.5.
372. See *Handlungstheorie und Systemtheorie* (1978), in Soziologische Aufklärung 3: Soziales System, Gesellschaft, Organisation, (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1981), pp.50-66 (55).
373. *Soziologie als Theorie sozialer Systeme*, p.115.
374. *Soziologische Aufklärung*, pp.80,86.
375. *Sinn als Grundbegriff der Soziologie*, in Habermas, Luhmann, Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie -- Was leistet die Systemforschung?, pp.25-100 (85-86).
376. *Soziologische Aufklärung*, pp.82-85.
377. *Unverständliche Wissenschaft -- Probleme einer theorieeigenen Sprache* (1979), in Soziologische Aufklärung 3, pp.170-177 (170).

378. Wie ist soziale Ordnung möglich?, in Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik 2, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1981), pp.195-285 (198-199).

379. Die Differenzierung von Interaktion und Gesellschaft: Probleme der sozialen Solidarität, in Robert Kopp (ed.), Solidarität in der Welt der 80er Jahre: Leistungsgesellschaft und Sozialstaat, (Frankfurt a.M.: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1984), pp.79-96 (92).

380. Vorwort, in Soziologische Aufklärung 4: Beiträge zur funktionalen Differenzierung der Gesellschaft, (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1987), pp.5-7 (6).

381. Vorwort, in Soziologische Aufklärung 5: Konstruktivistische Perspektiven, (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990), pp.7-13 (7).

382. Niklas Luhmann, "Ich denke primär historisch" -- Religionssoziologische Perspektiven, Ein Gespräch mit Fragen von Detlef Pollack, in Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie, Vol.39 (1991), No.9, pp.937-956 (938).

383. Luhmann describes universal theories as a "field of experience" for the oscillation between external observation and self-observation. See The Autopoiesis of Social Systems, in Felix Geyer, Johannes van der Zouwen (eds.), Sociocybernetic Paradoxes: Observation, Control and Evolution of Self-Steering Systems, (London: Beverly Hills, 1986), pp.172-192 (188).

384. See Die Praxis der Theorie.

385. "Biographie, Attitüden, Zettelkasten", p.135.

386. Niklas Luhmann, Die Richtigkeit soziologischer Theorie, in Merkur, Vol.41 (1987), pp.36-49 (42).

387. See e.g. Soziologie als Theorie sozialer Systeme, p.113; Soziologische Aufklärung p.86; Vorwort, in Vertrauen, p.v; the idea to present value-freedom as a means of unburdening, of relieving sociology from complexity is from Die Praxis der Theorie, p.256-257; see also the remarks on the de-dogmatization of sociology in Sinn als Grundbegriff der Soziologie, pp.85-86; the necessity of an autonomous architecture of concepts is emphasized, with reference to Parsons, in Macht, (Stuttgart: Enke, 1975), p.17.

388. Die Praxis der Theorie, pp.260,262; Moderne Systemtheorien als Form gesamtgesellschaftlicher Analyse, p.11.

389. See e.g. Niklas Luhmann, Die Weltgesellschaft (1971), in Soziologische Aufklärung 2: Aufsätze zur Theorie der Gesellschaft, (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2nd ed. 1982), pp.51-71; also Selbst-Thematisierungen des Gesellschaftssystems (1973), in Soziologische Aufklärung 2, pp.72-102 (82); Macht, p.97; The World Society as a Social System, International Journal of General Systems, Vol.8 (1982), pp.131-138; etc.

390. For a discussion (1968) of why society should be understood as a system and for an early scepticism presenting society (and not: social change) as the real crux of



systems theory, see *Moderne Systemtheorien als Form gesamtgesellschaftlicher Analyse*, pp.15-24.

391. The 1966 article "Reflexive Mechanismen" also introduced the distinction between reflexivity and reflexion depending on whether an act refers to another act of similar kind or to the system which it is part of respectively. See pp.99-100.

392. *Soziologie als Theorie sozialer Systeme*, p.126.

393. *Soziologische Aufklärung*, pp.70-71.

394. Zweckbegriff und Systemrationalität, pp.8,157-158. Luhmann refers to Norbert Wiener's classic, which more or less inaugurated the science of cybernetics.

395. *Selbst-Thematisierungen des Gesellschaftssystems: Über die Kategorie der Reflexion aus Sicht der Systemtheorie*, in Soziologische Aufklärung 2, pp.72-102.

396. *Einführende Bemerkungen zu einer Theorie symbolisch generalisierter Kommunikationsmedien* (1974), in Soziologische Aufklärung 2, pp.170-192 (186).

397. *Systemtheorie, Evolutionstheorie und Kommunikationstheorie*, in Soziologische Aufklärung 2, pp.193-203. The paper is a revised version of a lecture given at the Amsterdam Festival of Social Sciences, April 7-18, 1975.

398. *Vorwort* (May 1975), in Soziologische Aufklärung 2, p.5.

399. Humberto R. Maturana, Francesco J. Varela, Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living, (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1980).

400. This is the way Gunther Teubner illustrated system-environment relations in his seminar "Autopoiesis in Law and Politics" (Fall 1991) at the EUI.

401. For non-mathematical overviews see e.g. Ian Stewart, Does God Play Dice?, (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989); for a short introduction James P. Crutchfield, J. Dooyne Farmer, Norma H. Packard and Robert S. Shaw, *Chaos*, in *Scientific American*, Vol.255, No.6 (December 1986), pp.38-49.

402. The very fact that the discovery of chaotic, non-linear dynamics struck the natural sciences as a shock is quite telling. The shock is usually presented as an advancement of knowledge. See e.g. James Gleick, Chaos -- Making a New Science, (New York: Penguin, 1988). A more interesting history of Chaos Theory should start from the question of how self-reference, subjectivity, circularity was excluded from the realm of admissible observations. For it is only on the basis of this traditional exclusion that Chaos Theory comes in the clothes of a "revolution"; the "revolution" of Chaos Theory shows, in some sense, how the tradition, now as before, is taken for granted. Revealing is also that Gleick's history of Chaos Theory starts with Henri Poincaré (1854-1912) whereas a more interesting history of the theory should start with Descartes, if not earlier.

403. See the general remarks in *Die Voraussetzung der Kausalität*, in Niklas Luhmann, Karl Eberhard Schorr (eds.), Zwischen Technologie und Selbstreferenz -- Fragen an die

Pädagogik, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp stw, 1982), pp.41-50. Causality is presented as a "kind of organization of self-reference" in Luhmann's introduction, "Paradigmawechsel in der Systemtheorie", to Soziale Systeme -- Grundriß einer allgemeinen Theorie, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp stw, 4th ed. 1991), p.26.

404. See his remarks in Reflexive Mechanismen, pp.101-103.

405. See Soziologie als Theorie sozialer Systeme, p.128; for the comment on obscurity Zweckbegriff und Systemrationalität, p.349.

406. Systemtheoretische Argumentationen, p.315.

407. Soziologische Aufklärung 1, Vorwort (1969), p.5, Vorwort (1972), p.6.

408. The general reference for the design is, of course, what is considered Luhmann's main work, Soziale Systeme -- Grundriß einer allgemeinen Theorie (1984). For a brilliant summary see his article The Autopoiesis of Social Systems.

409. There is a chapter on "Structure and Time" in Soziale Systeme, but it conspicuously begins with the observation that it is only the eighth chapter and that, in fact, systems theory does not have to fall back upon the term "structure" for its self-description. See Soziale Systeme, p.377.

410. See Funktionen und Folgen formaler Organisation, pp.24-26.

411. Even in the inaugural lecture the term did not seem to have caused any problems. See Soziologische Aufklärung, e.g. pp.74,78.

412. Sinn als Grundbegriff der Soziologie, pp.51-52 (especially footnote 25).

413. Identitätsgebrauch in selbst-substitutiven Ordnungen, besonders Gesellschaften (1979), in Soziologische Aufklärung 3, pp.198-227 (219).

414. For a retrospective interpretation of his theoretical decision, see Intersubjektivität oder Kommunikation: Unterschiedliche Ausgangspunkte soziologischer Theoriebildung in Archivio di Filosofia, Vol.54 (1986), pp.41-60.

415. Handlungstheorie und Systemtheorie, pp.57-58, suggests that actions are constituted by processes of attribution, but still considers actions as the elements of social systems. But see also the remarks in Macht, p.5, where Luhmann suggests that only communication could constitute social systems.

416. See Vorbemerkungen zu einer Theorie sozialer Systeme (1981), in Soziologische Aufklärung 3, pp.11-24 (15-17); and for 1982 see Autopoiesis, Handlung und kommunikative Verständigung, in Zeitschrift für Soziologie, Vol.11, No.4 (4 October 1982), pp.366-379 (372).

417. See in addition to Autopoiesis, Handlung und kommunikative Verständigung, the relevant chapter "Kommunikation und Handlung" in Soziale Systeme, pp.191-241.



418. See Sinn als Grundbegriff der Soziologie. An English translation of the text was published in Niklas Luhmann, Essays on Self-Reference, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990). It is telling that Luhmann apparently did not see any problem in publishing again a text which was almost 20 years old.
419. Complexity and Meaning, in The Science and Praxis of Complexity, (Tokyo: United Nations University, 1985), pp.99-104 (102).
420. Macht, p.56.
421. Soziologie als Theorie sozialer Systeme, pp.115-116.
422. See Sinn als Grundbegriff, p.92.
423. Insistence on Systems Theory: Perspectives from Germany -- An Essay, revised version of a paper presented at the 1981 meeting of the American Sociological Association, published in Social Forces, Vol.61, No.4 (June 1983), pp.987-998 (994).
424. See Wie ist soziale Ordnung möglich?, pp.279-282; see also Niklas Luhmann, Wie ist Bewußtsein an Kommunikation beteiligt?, in Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Karl Ludwig Pfeiffer (eds.), Materialität der Kommunikation, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp stw, 1988), pp.884-905 (895).
425. Interpenetration -- Zum Verhältnis personaler und sozialer Systeme (1977), in Soziologische Aufklärung 3, pp.151-169 (154).
426. Vorbemerkungen zu einer Theorie sozialer Systeme, p.21.
427. Insistence on Systems Theory, p.995.
428. Vorwort, in Soziale Systeme, pp.9-10.
429. The Theory of Social Systems and Its Epistemology: Reply to Danilo Zolo's Critical Comments, in Philosophy of the Social Sciences, Vol.16 (1986), pp.129-134 (130).
430. Neuere Entwicklungen in der Systemtheorie, in Merkur, Vol.42, No.4 (April 1988), pp.292-300 (296-297).
431. Soziale Systeme, p.31.
432. See e.g. Selbstreferenz und Teleologie in gesellschaftstheoretischer Perspektive, in Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik 2, pp.9-44 (26); The Autopoiesis of Social Systems, p.184; Neue Entwicklungen in der Systemtheorie, p.295; Das Moderne der modernen Gesellschaft (1990), in Beobachtungen der Moderne, (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992), pp.11-49 (33).
433. See e.g. Vorwort, in Soziologische Aufklärung 5, p.10. Later statements which present the de-paradoxation of paradoxes as the ultimate reference point for functional analysis are just new versions of the proclaimed necessity of the externalisation of self-reference. See Sthenographie, in Niklas Luhmann et al., Beobachter -- Konvergenz der

Erkenntnistheorien?, (München: Fink, 2nd ed. 1992 (first 1990)), pp.119-137 (129), in relation to section 124. below.

434. Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1990), p.538.

435. Die Richtigkeit soziologischer Theorie, pp.44-45.

436. On the denial of an anthropological conception of man, see e.g. The Individuality of the Individual: Historical Meanings and Contemporary Problems, in Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, David E. Wellbery (eds.), Reconstructing Individualism -- Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986), pp.313-325 (322); for related remarks along the same line also Die Soziologie und der Mensch, in Neue Sammlung, Vol.25 (1985), pp.33-41; Autopoiesis als soziologischer Begriff, in Hans Haferkamp, Michael Schmid (eds.), Sinn, Kommunikation und soziale Differenzierung -- Beiträge zu Luhmanns Theorie sozialer Systeme, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp stw, 1987), pp.307-324 (309); also the remarks in Das Erkenntnisprogramm des Konstruktivismus und die unbekannt bleibende Realität, in Soziologische Aufklärung 5, pp.31-58 (53-54).

437. Sthenographie, p.132.

438. The Individuality of the Individual, p.315.

439. Wie ist soziale Ordnung möglich?, p.235; Die Richtigkeit soziologischer Theorie, p.44.

440. The Individuality of the Individual, pp.317,319.

441. Niklas Luhmann, Individuum und Gesellschaft, Universitas, Vol.39 (1984), pp.1-11 (8).

442. See already Vorbemerkungen zu einer Theorie sozialer Systeme, p.19; also Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft, p.360.

443. Niklas Luhmann, Am Ende der kritischen Soziologie, in Zeitschrift für Soziologie, Vol.20, No.2 (April 1991), pp.147-152.

444. Systemtheorie, Evolutionstheorie und Kommunikationstheorie, p.202.

445. Handlungstheorie und Systemtheorie, p.50.

446. Unverständliche Wissenschaft -- Probleme einer theorieeigenen Sprache, pp.174,177.

447. In addition to Unverständliche Wissenschaft, p.174, see also Identitätsgebrauch in selbstsubstitutiven Ordnungen, besonders Gesellschaften, p.198.

448. Niklas Luhmann, Talcott Parsons -- Zur Zukunft eines Theorieprogramms, in Zeitschrift für Soziologie, Vol.9, No.1 (January 1980), pp.5-17. For a more recent re-assessment of Parsons' Theory, see also Luhmann, Warum AGIL?, in Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie, Vol.40, 1988, pp.127-139.



449. See Author's Preface, in Niklas Luhmann, The Differentiation of Society, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp.ix-xii, written in May 1980.
450. Vorwort, in Soziologische Aufklärung 3, pp.5-7 (7), written in February 1981.
451. Autopoiesis, Handlung und kommunikative Verständigung, pp.367-368, 376.
452. See Vorwort, in Soziale Systeme, p.14.
453. "Biographie, Attitüden, Zettelkasten", p.145; Stellungnahme, in Werner Krawietz, Michael Welker (eds.), Kritik der Theorie sozialer Systeme -- Auseinandersetzung mit Luhmanns Hauptwerk, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp stw, 1992), pp.371-386 (377-378).
454. Vorwort, Soziale Systeme, p.14.
455. "Biographie, Attitüden, Zettelkasten", pp.142,145,155.
456. Die Praxis der Theorie, p.264.
457. In the Federal Republic of Germany, Maturana's ideas were first taken up by an interdisciplinary working group (including Peter M. Hejl, Wolfram K. Köck, G. Roth) at the Forschungs- und Entwicklungszentrum für objektivierte Lehr- und Lernverfahren GmbH. The distribution of a German version of Maturana's Biology of Cognition in 1975 aroused some interest on the part of various other disciplines, and in 1977 the University of Bremen offered the institutional and financial support for a first exploratory symposium on the new model. Conference presentations were published in 1978 as P.M. Hejl, W.K. Köck, G. Roth (eds.), Wahrnehmung und Kommunikation, (Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 1978). As interest in the theory grew, a second symposium in 1979 was split: the biological aspects of self-organisation were discussed at Bremen, the problems of the social sciences at Paderborn. Conference papers of the latter meeting were published in 1980 as Frank Benseler, Peter M. Hejl, Wolfram K. Köck (eds.), Autopoiesis, Communication, and Society -- The Theory of Autopoietic Systems in the Social Sciences, (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1980). For this overview see the introduction to the 1980 volume, pp.8-10. In his contribution to the volume of 1980, Frank Benseler already refers to "points of contact" between Luhmann and Maturana. See his On the History of Systems Thinking in Sociology, in Autopoiesis, Communication, and Society, pp.33-43 (38).
458. The Theory of social Systems and its Epistemology: Reply to Danilo Zolo, p.129.
459. Later, Luhmann even considers the close cooperation and personal acquaintance among Gotthard Günther, Humberto Maturana, Heinz von Foerster, Joseph Glanville, and Luhmann himself to be "interesting in the context of the sociology of science". Apparently this group of researchers is mainly organized by von Foerster. See footnote 7 in Am Ende der kritischen Soziologie, p.149.
460. Systeme verstehen Systeme, in Niklas Luhmann, Karl-Eberhard Schorr (eds.), Zwischen Intransparenz und Verstehen -- Fragen an die Pädagogik, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp stw, 1986), pp.72-117 (91, footnote 33).

461. The Self-Description of Society: Crisis Fashion and Sociological Theory, in International Journal of Comparative Sociology, Vol.25, No.1-2 (1984), pp.59-72 (65,68).

462. Vorwort, in Soziologische Aufklärung 4, p.7.

463. Autopoiesis als soziologischer Begriff, pp.307-308.

464. Stellungnahme, p.386.

465. See the remarks in Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft, pp.388 (footnote 43),652.

466. The Individuality of the Individual, p.322.

467. See e.g. Die Autopoiesis des Bewußtseins, in Soziale Welt, Vol.36 (1985), pp.402-446 (405,414); The Autopoiesis of Social Systems, pp.179-180.

468. See e.g. Intersubjektivität oder Kommunikation, p.56; very clear also in Niklas Luhmann, Ökologische Kommunikation: Kann die moderne Gesellschaft sich auf ökologische Gefährdungen einstellen? (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986), p.59; see also Tautologie und Paradoxie in den Selbstbeschreibungen der modernen Gesellschaft, in Zeitschrift für Soziologie, Vol.16, No.3 (June 1987), pp.161-174 (172).

469. Talcott Parsons -- Zur Zukunft eines Theorieprogramms, p.13.

470. George Spencer Brown, Laws of Form, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969; 2nd ed. New York: Julian Press, 1972).

471. See e.g. Neuere Entwicklungen in der Systemtheorie, p.296.

472. This interpretation of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida was evidently inspired by Hilary Lawson, Reflexivity -- The post-modern Predicament, (London: Hutchinson, 1985). See Die Richtigkeit soziologischer Theorie, p.47, footnote 17; explicitly also in Sthenographie, p.120.

473. Die Richtigkeit soziologischer Theorie, p.46; Sthenographie, p.120.

474. Autopoiesis als soziologischer Begriff, p.315.

475. Die Richtigkeit der Theorie, p.39.

476. Soziale Systeme, pp.647-661; the description of self-reference as an "explosive" is on p.656.

477. Tautologie und Paradoxie in den Selbstbeschreibungen der modernen Gesellschaft, p.171.

478. Heinz von Foerster, Objects: Tokens for (Eigen-)Behaviours, and On Constructing a Reality, both in Observing Systems, (Seaside, CA: Intersystems Publications, 2nd ed. 1984), pp.274-285 and pp.288-309 respectively.

479. Die Autopoiesis des Bewußtseins, p.440; Die Richtigkeit der Theorie, p.38.



480. Das Erkenntnisprogramm des Konstruktivismus und die unbekannt bleibende Realität, p.45.
481. Die Richtigkeit der Theorie, p.39.
482. Autopoiesis als soziologischer Begriff, pp.311,314; Neuere Entwicklungen in der Systemtheorie, p.295.
483. Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft, p.306-307; Vorwort, in Soziologische Aufklärung 5, p.9; Das Erkenntnisprogramm des Konstruktivismus und die unbekannt bleibende Realität, p.41.
484. Niklas Luhmann, Ökologie des Nichtwissens, in Beobachtungen der Moderne, pp.149-220 (170).
485. Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft, p.15; Vorwort, in Soziologische Aufklärung 5, p.11.
486. Die Richtigkeit soziologischer Theorie, p.38; Das Erkenntnisprogramm des Konstruktivismus und die unbekannt bleibende Realität, p.49; Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft, pp.690-691.
487. Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft, p.87.
488. See Kontingenz als Eigenwert der modernen Gesellschaft, in Beobachtungen der Moderne, pp.93-128.
489. See Author's Preface, in Luhmann, The Differentiation of Society, p.ix.
490. These handy definitions are given in The Self-Description of Society: Crisis Fashion and Sociological Theory, p.64.
491. In Soziologie als Theorie sozialer Systeme, p.124, Luhmann only introduces two stages: segmentary and functional differentiation. To my knowledge, this is Luhmann's first text (published in 1967) where society's evolution is depicted in these terms. The three-stages-picture is given, at the latest, in Systemtheorie, Evolutionstheorie und Kommunikationstheorie, pp.197-198, in 1975.
492. See Gesellschaftliche Struktur und semantische Tradition, in Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik 1, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1980), pp.9-71, on the relation between structure and semantics. The characterization of modern European society as functionally differentiated is given on p.27.
493. A good discussion, almost a case study, of the consequences of functional differentiation is Ökologische Kommunikation: Kann sich die moderne Gesellschaft auf ökologische Gefährdungen einstellen?. See p.87 on interdependence, p.210 on redundancy, pp.211-212 on contingency.
494. Tautologie und Paradoxie in den Selbstbeschreibungen der modernen Gesellschaft, p.162.

495. Niklas Luhmann, Erleben und Handeln, in Soziologische Aufklärung 3, pp.67-80 (76).
496. Identitätsgebrauch in selbstsubstitutiven Ordnungen, besonders Gesellschaften, p.209.
497. On the relation between functional differentiation and increasing demands on individuality see e.g. Interpenetration -- Zum Verhältnis personaler und sozialer Systeme, p.158; Identitätsgebrauch in selbstsubstitutiven Ordnungen, besonders Gesellschaften, p.217. On an increasing "distance" between social and psychic systems see e.g. Liebe als Passion, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 6th ed. 1992), p.16; Die Autopoiesis des Bewußtseins, p.436.
498. Ökologie des Nichtwissens, p.181.
499. The relation between the (new) conceptualization of action and the possibility of empirical research in semantics is made explicit in Handlungstheorie und Systemtheorie, pp.58-59.
500. Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik 1-3, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1980,81,89); Liebe als Passion: Zur Codierung von Intimität, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1982 (6th ed. 1992)).
501. See the prefaces of Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik 1, p.8, and Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik 2, p.8.
502. See the crucial remarks in Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft, pp.616-619.
503. Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft, p.634.
504. See e.g. Vorwort, in Soziologische Aufklärung 4, p.6; Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft, p.710; Das Erkenntnisprogramm des Konstruktivismus und die unbekannt bleibende Realität, pp.57-58.
505. See e.g. Das Moderne der modernen Gesellschaft, p.47; Kontingenz als Eigenwert der modernen Gesellschaft, pp.93-128.
506. See Die Beschreibung der Zukunft, in Beobachtungen der Moderne, pp.129-147; and especially Niklas Luhmann, Soziologie des Risikos, (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1991).
507. Tautologie und Paradoxie in den Selbstbeschreibungen der modernen Gesellschaft, p.168.
508. Georges Dumézil, Entretiens avec Didier Eribon, (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), p.217; quoted in Arpad Scakolczai, Nietzsche's Genealogical Method: Presentation and Application, forthcoming as EUI Working Paper in Social and Political Sciences, p.48, endnote no.77.
509. See in the preface to Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik 3, p.10, his remarks on the concepts of the "author" (with self-referential implications!). For a recent contribution emphasizing and illustrating this point, see Niklas Luhmann, Wer kennt Wil Martens? --



Eine Anmerkung zum Problem der Emergenz sozialer Systeme, in Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie, Vol.44, 1992, pp.139-142.

510. Luhmann once remarked that the proper alternative to his systems theory was a "relatively theory-less empirical research which works with ad-hoc hypotheses". He emphasized the important merits of this type of work. See *Neuere Entwicklungen in der Systemtheorie*, p.298.

511. Interesting (but also ambiguous) passages on this point in Also sprach Zarathustra can be found e.g. in the second part, Von den berühmten Weisen, and in Von der Selbst-Überwindung.

512. Zur Genealogie der Moral, Zweite Abhandlung, No.16.

513. This expression is from the preface to the second edition of Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft, No.4.

514. M. Clark, Michel Foucault: An annotated Bibliography. Tool kit for a New Age, (New York: Garland, 1983).

515. I already alluded, in previous chapters, to the silence encountered by Nietzsche and Foucault. Similarly, Luhmann complains about a "peculiar disproportion" between the attention paid to the theory of autopoiesis and the lack of appropriate theoretical redispersions which this very theory, taken seriously, demands. See Autopoiesis als soziologischer Begriff, p.309.

516. For this distinction between the two approaches and this example, see Niklas Luhmann, *Vorbemerkungen zu einer Theorie sozialer Systeme*, p.11.

517. *Vorbemerkungen zu einer Theorie sozialer Systeme*, p.20.

518. In addition to everything I said in chapters Two and Three on Nietzsche and Foucault, I should add that Niklas Luhmann, too, understands ethics as a limitation of and a reflection on what counts as morally self-evident. For example, in the lecture he gave when he was awarded the Hegel-Prize in 1989, Niklas Luhmann interprets ethics as a "Reflexionstheorie der Moral". See Niklas Luhmann, Paradigm lost: Über die ethische Reflexion der Moral, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp stw, 1990).

519. For a full account of the argument (and an application) see Stefan Rossbach, The Dynamics of Truthfulness and the Cold War, forthcoming; and for an overview Stefan Rossbach, The Autopoiesis of the Cold War: An Evolutionary Approach to International Relations?, (Florence: EUI Working Papers in Political and Social Sciences SPS No.92/23, 1992).

520. Hence, this essay, in all possible respects, goes much beyond Hilary Lawson's introductory discussion of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida. See Hilary Lawson, Reflexivity -- The post-modern predicament, (London: Hutchinson, 1985).

521. See e.g. The Use of Pleasures, p.6.







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